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HMRC HOTLINE FAILS TO ANSWER 4 MILLION CALLS

£47bn of taxes unpaid

EXCLUSIVE

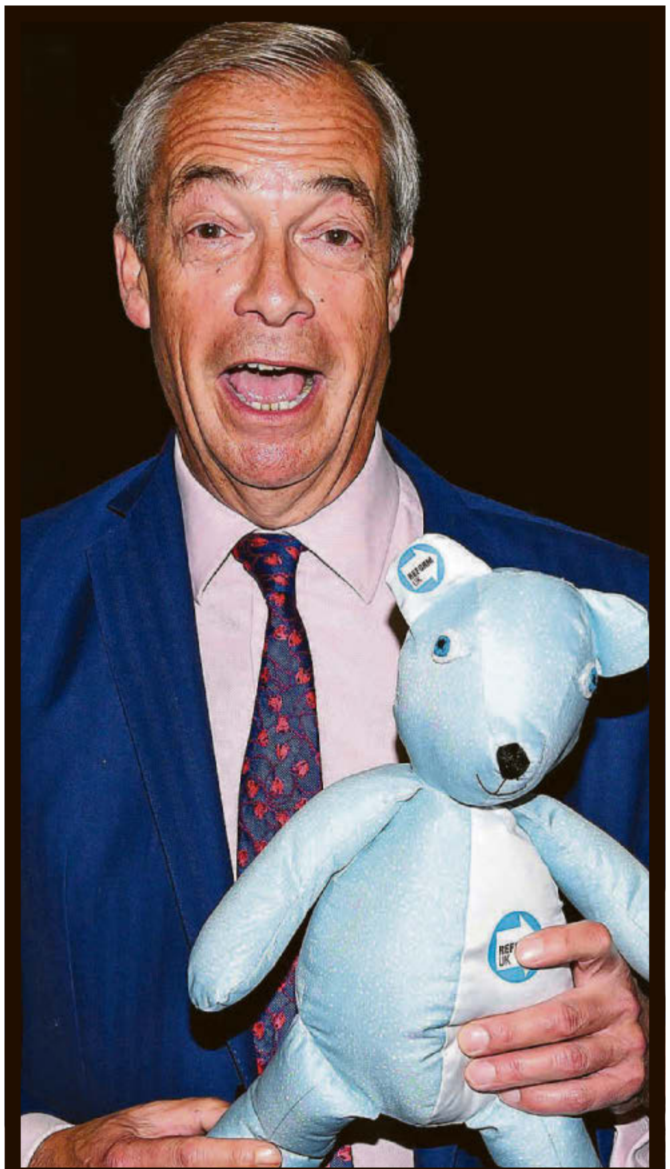
By **Jonathan Walker** WHITEHALL EDITOR

TAX officials failing to collect billions of pounds for the Treasury have admitted they ignore millions of phone calls from businesses trying to pay what they owe.

A staggering £46.8billion every year is not being raked in by HMRC – enough to plug a black hole in the public finances and allow Rachel Reeves to balance the books without requiring further tax hikes.

If this money had been collected, the Chancellor would not have needed to

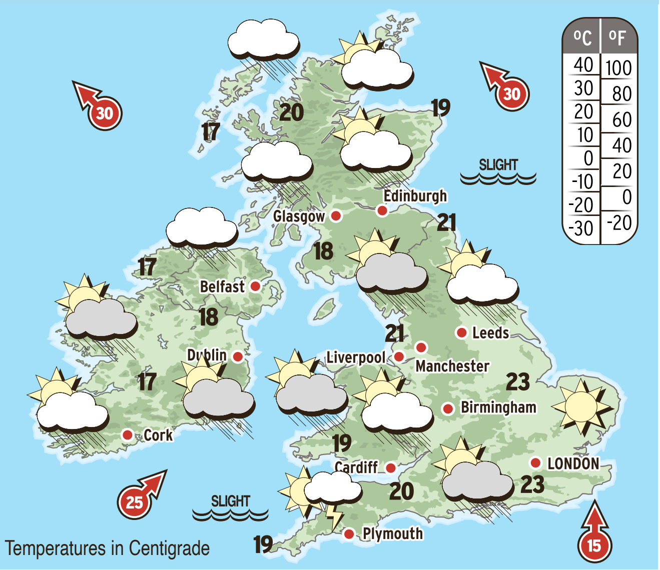
TURN TO PAGE 7



Farage: Britain needs Refus the Bear

SEE PAGES 4&5

Weather forecast



Today's summary: Cloudy morning, sunny evening

North West: Cloudy with light drizzle at times. Sun and downpours later. Gentle breezes, mild warmth. High 22C (72F).

Northern Ireland: Cloudy with showers easing to a few drizzles. Thunderstorms later. Breezy, mild conditions. High 18C (64F).

Wales: Clouds and light rain early. Thunderstorms and heavy bursts later. Breezy, mild conditions. High 20C (68F).

Midlands: Cloudy with rain for a time. Sunshine and showers later. Moderate winds, mild temperatures. High 22C (72F).

North East/Yorks: Cloudy with light rain possible. Some sun later. Breezy and warm. High 23C (73F).

Scotland: Cloudy with light rain. Drizzle later. Moderate winds, feeling mild. High 21C (70F).

East Anglia: Cloudy start, sunny spells later. Breezy with a mild feel throughout the day. High 24C (75F).

London/South East: Cloudy with sunny spells later. Breezy with mild temperatures throughout. High 24C (75F).

South: Cloudy with some rain. Sunny spells later. Breezy winds. Mild temperatures. High 21C (70F).

South West: Cloudy with light rain. Thunderstorms and more rain later. Breezy with mild temperatures. High 20C (68F).

Channel Isles: Cloudy with some rain. Sunshine breaks later. Moderate winds, staying mild. High 22C (72F).

Sea: Slight or moderate, occasionally rough later in west.

UK OUTLOOK TOMORROW: Expect overcast skies with occasional light rain. Breezy conditions persist, becoming drier later with some sunny spells emerging.

SIX-DAY FORECAST

Temperatures in Centigrade

	MON		TUE		WED		THU		FRI		SAT	
	min	max	min	max	min	max	min	max	min	max	min	max
London	10	21	13	20	12	20	10	19	9	18	12	18
Belfast	8	16	12	16	10	16	9	15	9	15	10	15
Birmingham	9	19	12	19	11	19	9	18	9	17	11	17
Cardiff	10	18	13	18	12	18	11	17	10	16	12	18
Glasgow	10	17	13	18	12	17	11	16	10	16	12	16
Manchester	10	18	13	19	11	18	10	17	9	16	12	16
Newcastle	8	20	12	20	11	20	10	18	9	18	11	18
Norwich	10	22	13	21	12	21	10	20	9	19	12	19
Plymouth	13	17	13	16	12	17	12	17	12	16	13	16

Britain yesterday

24 hours to 5pm	SUN (hrs)	RAIN (ins)	TEMP (min)	(max)
Aberdeen	3.9	0.00	9	17
Aberporth	4.3	0.02	11	21
Alnwick	3.3	0.00	8	17
Belfast	0.6	0.06	13	18
Birmingham	9.3	0.00	12	23
B'mouth	10.5	0.00	9	21
Bristol	10.0	0.00	12	22
Cardiff	8.1	0.00	13	22
Durham	7.6	0.00	8	19
Edinburgh	3.6	0.00	11	20
Glasgow	2.3	0.00	13	19
Hull	2.7	0.00	8	21
Ipswich	7.8	0.00	13	22
Leeds	7.8	0.00	10	22
Lincoln	4.6	0.00	11	22
London	7.9	0.00	12	24
Manchester	3.5	0.00	10	21
Oxford	8.2	0.00	11	22
S'hampton	10.7	0.00	14	21
St Andrews	3.3	0.00	8	18

Moon, sun and tides

MOON rises: 7.30pm, sets: 5.42am
SUN rises London: 6.23am, sets: 7.33pm
Manchester rises: 6.28am, sets: 7.43pm

Last Quarter
14 September

HIGH TIDE

London B'ge	(2.13am), (2.35pm)
Liverpool	(11.45am), (11.56pm)
Greenock	(12.42am), (1.05pm)
Dover	(11.35am), (11.54pm)

Britain Extremes:
(24 hours to 2pm yesterday)

Warmest: Lakenheath 23C (73F)
Coldest: Aboyne 4C (39F)
Wettest: Lough Fea 0.10in.
Sunniest: Lerwick 10.2hr.

Lighting-up times

Belfast	7.59pm-6.43am
Birmingham	7.41pm-6.30am
Bristol	7.42pm-6.34am
Glasgow	7.55pm-6.35am
London	7.33pm-6.24am
Manchester	7.43pm-6.30am
Newcastle	7.43pm-6.26am

Europe forecast

Today			Tomorrow		
Amsterdam	Sunny	28C/82F	**Amsterdam**	Fair	23C/73F
Brussels	Sunny	29C/84F	**Brussels**	Fair	22C/72F
Dublin	Showers	18C/64F	**Dublin**	Showers	17C/63F
Frankfurt	Sunny	26C/79F	**Frankfurt**	Rain	24C/75F
Geneva	Sunny	27C/81F	**Geneva**	Thunder	24C/75F
Lisbon	Rain	26C/79F	**Lisbon**	Sunny	24C/75F
Madrid	Sunny	28C/82F	**Madrid**	Sunny	29C/84F
Paris	Sunny	30C/86F	**Paris**	Fair	22C/72F
Rome	Sunny	29C/84F	**Rome**	Sunny	29C/84F

Around the world yesterday

		C	F			C	F			C	F
Amsterdam	Sunny	21	70	Hong Kong	Sunny	32	90	New York	Fair	28	82
Athens	Sunny	32	90	Istanbul	Thndr	21	70	Nice	Sunny	25	77
Barcelona	Sunny	26	79	Jersey	Sunny	20	68	Nicosia	Fair	33	91
Berlin	Fair	20	68	Larnaca	Sunny	30	86	Perth	Shwrs	15	59
Budapest	Sunny	24	75	Las Palmas	Sunny	27	81	Prague	Fair	20	68
Cairo	Sunny	31	88	Los Angeles	Sunny	23	73	Singapore	Fair	30	86
Cape Town	Sunny	18	64	Luxor	Sunny	39	102	Stockholm	Cloudy	19	66
Casablanca	Sunny	28	82	Malaga	Sunny	29	84	Sydney	Fair	20	68
Corfu	Sunny	30	86	Mallorca	Sunny	31	88	Tel Aviv	Sunny	32	90
Dublin	Shwrs	17	63	Malta	Sunny	30	86	Tenerife	Sunny	29	84
Dubrovnik	Sunny	26	79	Melbourne	Sunny	18	64	Toronto	Cloudy	22	72
Faro	Sunny	26	79	Miami	Thndr	31	88	Tunis	Sunny	33	91
Florence	Sunny	29	84	Moscow	Sunny	18	64	Venice	Sunny	26	79
Gibraltar	Cloudy	24	75	Nairobi	Sunny	24	75	Vienna	Fair	21	70
Guernsey	Sunny	20	68	New Delhi	Thndr	33	91	Warsaw	Thndr	20	68

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Pete Hegseth
Secretary of War

ON OFFENSIVE: Hegseth applauds Trump's order

Trump: This means War

PRESIDENT Donald Trump has changed the name of the US Department of Defense to the Department of War.

Pete Hegseth will now be known as Secretary of War.

The "$1billion rebrand" restores the title which the department held until 1947, and is intended to project "strength and resolve". It will be a "secondary title" until Congress approves it.

After signing the executive order on Friday, Mr Trump said: "I think it's a much more appropriate name, in light of where the world is right now."

Tributes to 'kind couple' killed in tram disaster

By **Tony Whitfield**

THE heartbroken families of a British couple killed in the Lisbon funicular crash paid tribute to them yesterday, calling them selfless, kind and caring.

Kayleigh Gillian Smith, 36, and her partner William Nelson, 44, were pictured smiling on one of the city's famous trams shortly before the fatal crash just after 6pm on Wednesday.

The pair and a third, as yet unnamed, Briton, aged 82, were among 16 people who lost their lives.

It is believed a steel cable snapped, sending the tram car hurtling down a steep incline, before it derailed and smashed into a building on a corner.

The pair arrived in the Portuguese capital on Tuesday and Kayleigh wrote online, hours before the disaster, that they had seen "churches and castles, tiles and trams".

Will lectured at Manchester's Arden School of Theatre, where Kayleigh graduated with a Master's in July. She worked as a theatre director and funeral operative. They lived in Macclesfield and had been together for six years.

HOLIDAY: Will and Kayleigh, inset, were among 16 who died in crash

In a statement released though Cheshire Constabulary, Kayleigh's family said she "was loved by family and friends for her wit and humour, her kind and caring nature came to the fore in her work. They both leave family and friends heartbroken."

Will's younger brother said: "This week, we lost Will, who was not just my big brother but everyone's.

"He was always kind, selfless, and protective, and the world does not feel right or normal without him. He was and has always been my hero. Love you, rest in peace you legend."

The other known fatalities were five Portuguese nationals, two Canadians, two South Koreans, one American, one French, one Swiss and one Ukrainian. A further 22 people – none known to be British – were injured.

A preliminary report into what happened to the funicular tram, which could hold 40 people, was due to be presented yesterday.

The National Lottery

JACKPOT £7 MILLION
10 22 37 40 45 57 BONUS BALL **24**

THUNDERBALL
1 3 16 22 29 THUNDERBALL **12**

The Health Lottery

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 6: BIG DRAW
3 13 27 43 47 BONUS BALL **24**

2ND CHANCE DRAW
5 7 19 34 44 (WINNER GETS £100K)

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Proms queen Katie backs stirring Last Night pomp and a classic tribute to Black Sabbath

By **Julia Kuttner**

KATIE Derham says The Last Night of the Proms' long-established traditions must be cherished... but she insisted future changes should not be feared.

The presenter will host the BBC coverage of the finale of the Proms season of summer classical musical concerts at London's Royal Albert Hall on Saturday evening.

Katie, fronting her 16th Proms, said: "I haven't heard anything to suggest changes are coming this year. But I absolutely think the discussion is worth having. It's healthy. As a broadcaster and as a nation, if we didn't listen to people's views, we'd be doing something wrong.

"That doesn't mean everything has to change – just that we stay open."

One of the traditions that sparks debate is the inclusion of Rule, Britannia! and Land of Hope and Glory in the Last Night set list, while Union flags are waved.

She says: "We're talking about a celebration. The Proms is joyful. It's about bringing people together through extraordinary music.

"If some traditions give people genuine pleasure, that's something to respect. And if, over time, things shift or are tweaked, that's fine too.

"But this isn't a political event, it's a musical one."

What began in 1895 as a classical series for the people now includes a dazzling range of genres and global sounds and voices – from grand symphonies to disco and soul.

And Katie, 55, is a big fan of this eclectic mix, adding: "There really is something for everyone. You wouldn't necessarily expect Ibiza Classics to work with an orchestra but it really does.

"Artists like Florence and the Machine, Sam Smith, Jessie Ware all worked with orchestras here and loved it.

"When Ozzy Osbourne died there was a flash mob in Birmingham playing Black Sabbath and I thought it was brilliant.

"There's no reason something like a Black Sabbath Prom couldn't work.

"It just takes talented musicians, clever orchestration and a bit of imagination."

● *Listen to The Last Night of the Proms on Saturday live on BBC Radio 3 or watch on BBC Two from 6.55pm and BBC One from 9pm*

CELEBRATION: Katie Derham says flag-waving audience tradition at the Last Night, above, is worth respecting; left, with her fellow BBC Proms hosts

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Fergie snubs Celeb Traitors

INVITE: Sarah Ferguson turned down the offer

By **Rebecca Russell** DEPUTY ROYAL EDITOR

THE Duchess of York has turned down the chance to appear in the upcoming TV series The Celebrity Traitors.

Sarah Ferguson, 65, was approached to join the line-up of the first celebrity version of the popular BBC reality show, a game of betrayal to win a grand prize.

The celebrity spin-off is expected to start next month and will include Thursday Murder Club star Celia Imrie, talk show host Jonathan Ross and former Olympic diver Tom Daley, competing to win £100,000 for a charity of their choice.

A TV industry insider said: "The Duchess was approached about Celebrity Traitors early on. We got the impression she was a fan of the show but eventually turned it down on the basis that she doesn't do celebrity shows.

"That doesn't mean the BBC has given up on trying to get her to take part in a future series."

A spokesperson for the Duchess declined to comment.

While she has not appeared on any form of reality TV, the Duchess previously stood in as a guest panellist on ITV's Loose Women and enjoyed a one-day stint as the host of This Morning alongside Alison Hammond and Dermot O'Leary.

The invite comes as her ex-husband Prince Andrew faces increased scrutiny over his ties to Jeffrey Epstein amid ongoing protests demanding the full release of the late sex offender's files.

US Republican Nancy Mace has been calling for the criminal prosecution of Prince Andrew in the wake of ongoing protests from Epstein's victims.

The royal was a known acquaintance of the late sex offender and settled a civil case brought against him by one of Epstein's victims. The prince has strenuously denied all claims against him.

FARAGE PLEA TO REFORM CONFERENCE

BILL'S ARCHITECT: Angela Rayner

'Axe harmful work law now Rayner's out'

By **David Williamson**

THE Prime Minister must follow up Angela Rayner's exit by scrapping a workers' rights revolution likely to hit businesses to the tune of £5billion, Tory leader Kemi Badenoch says.

The Conservatives claim the former deputy prime minister was at the heart of a trade union-backed "war on the private sector", with Labour taking £35million in union donations since Sir Keir Starmer became leader.

Keeping the new sweeping workers' rights Bill in tact is "irresponsible and dangerous", they argue.

Noting the Government's own figures suggest the Bill will cost businesses £5billion, Mrs Badenoch said: "With his deputy now out of government, the PM needs to focus on the dire economic situation.

"If he is serious about delivering economic growth, this latest reset must start with the end of this disastrous Bill. It's the one request from every business I've spoken to."

Shadow Business and Trade Secretary Andrew Griffith branded Ms Rayner's package of measures an "Unemployment Bill", saying it would lead to more joblessness, lower wages and further strikes.

'It is a chance to change course'

Callum Price of the Institute of Economic Affairs said: "Mounting yet more obligations and red tape on businesses while raising the cost of labour through minimum wage and employment tax hikes is antithetical to growth. The Government should take this chance to consider changing course."

Labour said: "We are not scrapping this landmark legislation... [to end] exploitative zero hours contracts and fire and rehire, ensuring fair pay and improving parental leave."

It comes amid news Angela Rayner is due to receive a "golden goodbye" of £16,876, just weeks before new rules mean MPs who breach the ministerial code do not get such a payout. Ms Rayner was among MPs who voted in 2021 for such departing ministers to not receive the cash.

Tory party chair Kevin Hollinrake, said: "If she has any integrity surely she must decline any payment."

'You are the people's army... with discipline and unity, we will succeed'

TAKING LEAD: Reform chief thanks crowd

EXCLUSIVE

By **David WIlliamson**
CHIEF POLITICAL COMMENTATOR

REFORM UK leader Nigel Farage closed a celebratory conference with a plea for unity and for people to stand as candidates, as the insurgent party works for its biggest electoral breakthrough yet.

He urged the thousands of supporters in the hall and watching online to avoid public rows and to strive for success in the looming elections for the Scottish and Welsh parliaments, as well as councils across Britain.

The confidence of Mr Farage and his team on stage contrasted sharply with the difficulties which have rocked Sir Keir Starmer's Government in the wake of Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner's resignation.

As the Reform conference neared its end, more changes to Labour's team were announced as part of a sweeping reshuffle.

In the latest sign the PM wants a new approach to tackling the small boats crisis, he moved Dame Angela Eagle and Dame Diana Johnson from their roles in the Home Office – a day after Home Secretary Yvette Cooper's exit to the Foreign Office.

In Birmingham, Mr Farage told the audience: "[You] are the people's army – and to succeed it needs one thing: discipline.

"Can we please exercise discipline and air our disagreements between each other in private and not in public? If we do that we will succeed."

And Mr Farage has defended his ambition of ending small-boat crossings in a fortnight – though stressing he would need to pass the necessary legislation first.

He said: "As soon as the law is in place, as soon as you have the ability to detain and deport, you'll stop it in two weeks."

The party leader carried a bear named Refus – a combination of "Reform" and "us" – at the National Exhibition Centre. The 61-year-old was given the cuddly toy by a supporter during a walkabout on Friday.

And he will be buoyed by Opinium polling which found more people approve of how he is doing his job leading Reform than of how Sir Keir is performing as PM or how Kemi Badenoch is doing as Tory leader.

James Crouch, of Opinium, said: "It feels like an understatement to say it was an incredibly difficult week for the Government.

"The challenge the Prime Minister has is that few people like what he's saying,

PLATFORM: Lucy Connolly with Farage

and even fewer believe he'll deliver on it. That is what leaves the door wide open for Nigel Farage, who relished

RIGHT MOVE: Nigel Farage is given a hug by Nadine Dorries who switched from Tories

‘Lammy must act to stop crime wave’

By **David Williamson**

NEW Justice Secretary David Lammy should take immediate action to stop a “crime wave being unleashed” on Britain’s streets, his Tory opposite number has warned.

Robert Jenrick fears up to 43,000 criminals will escape a jail sentence as a result of Labour’s plans set in motion by his predecessor, the new Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood.

“Lammy has an opportunity to stop a crime wave being unleashed – or be remembered as the man who surrendered the Chagos islands and surrendered our streets to criminals,” he said.

Labour’s changes will introduce a presumption against jailing people for less than a year. Its radical prison shake-up means some criminals will be released a third of their way through sentences if they behave and join rehabilitation schemes – and some serious offenders will only serve half their terms rather than two-thirds.

WARNING: Robert Jenrick

Mr Jenrick said: “The first thing David Lammy should do when he gets to his desk is rethink Labour’s dangerous Sentencing Bill. It will see up to 43,000 criminals avoid prison every year – that’s over half of all criminals sent to prison each year.”

But a Labour source said Mr Jenrick had “some brass neck”, adding: “However hard he tries, the public can see right through his flagrant attempts to distance himself from his own record.

“The last Conservative government managed to add fewer than 500 prison places to the entire estate in 14 years, taking the criminal justice system to crisis point.”

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the platform afforded to him at his party’s conference.”

The final day saw Lucy Connolly – the former childminder jailed for stirring up racial hatred on social media against asylum seekers in the wake of the Southport attack which saw three little girls murdered – take to the stage for an interview with journalist supporter Allison Pearson, who described her as a “political prisoner”. Reform MP Sarah Pochin pledged a government led by her party would do away with “woke policing”.

She said: “Police appear to sympathise with protest groups that simply do not reflect the views of the majority of the British people. I am sure the police themselves would like nothing more than to get back to tackling crime, policing with impartiality, and to protecting the British people. A Reform government will address these issues and restore a strong police presence on our streets.”

Conference motions on reviewing asylum approvals by Labour and Conservative governments, repealing the 2008 Climate Change Act and removing “gender ideology from public organisations” were passed.

And former Conservative Leader of the Commons Jacob Rees-Mogg used an event at the conference to stamp on speculation he might be the latest Tory defector, following Nadine Dorries’s switch on Thursday.

He admitted his daughter, Mary, had joined and he was “having his arm twisted”.

But he said: “I’m going to remain a Tory because I think it is fundamental that we bring the family of the Right together.”

OPINION: PAGE 14

Voters say Labour failing to deliver on key issues

By **David Williamson**

BRITONS have given a scathing verdict on how Labour have tackled key issues, including the small boats crisis and raising living standards.

Exclusive polling shows six out of 10 people (58%) think Sir Keir Starmer’s Government has done a “bad job” in these areas.

Just 16% of people told pollsters Ipsos that Labour had done a “good job” in bringing down the number of small boat crossings and “restoring order to the asylum system”.

The findings will increase the pressure on the Government.

Sir Keir replaced Yvette Cooper as Home Secretary with Shabana Mahmood in the wake of more than 52,000 people coming to the UK on small boats since Labour took power.

While almost one in four people (23%) expect the Government to succeed in cutting NHS waiting times with 40,000 more appointments every week, more than half (52%) think it will fail.

There is deep pessimism about the prospects for the economy. More than seven in 10 (71%) think it will get worse in the next 12 months, with just 11% thinking it will improve.

Gideon Skinner, of Ipsos, said: “The public has a very clear and consistent set of priorities, centred on the cost of living, the economy and NHS – alongside concerns about small boats crossings.

“Yet these are areas where they are not only giving the Government poor marks for its current performance but are also pessimistic about its chances of long-term success.”

FALTERING: Sir Keir

KING AND QUEEN AT BRAEMAR GAMES

Right royal knees-up

Glenfiddich

VISIT: Charles and Camilla chat. Top, King arrives; Camilla with Baroness Kennedy; right, stone put

By **Jon Coates**

THERE were warm smiles from the King and Queen as they attended the annual Braemar Gathering Highland Games yesterday.

The royal couple were guests of honour at the event, which is held near their Highland residence Balmoral on the first Saturday of September every year.

Other guests included Absolutely Fabulous actress Dame Joanna Lumley and civil liberties campaigner Baroness Helena Kennedy.

Charles, 76, wore a kilt, while Camilla, 78, wore a blue coat with a tartan collar.

Yesterday's Games were the third that the King has attended as monarch, although he frequently attended while he was the Duke of Rothesay.

The games have been running in their present form since 1832. They have been attended regularly by the reigning monarch and other members of the Royal Family since 1848, and the popular event features a host of traditional Highland Games contests, including the tug-of-war, caber toss and the stone put.

There are also a number of performances from pipe bands and dancers.

The King had marked the start of his summer residency at Balmoral three weeks ago with a special military ceremony that involved a Shetland pony. His Majesty had inspected the regimental mascot and a Guard of Honour was held by Balaklava Company, 5th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland to welcome the King back to Aberdeenshire.

Charles has been having ongoing treatment for an undisclosed form of cancer since being diagnosed in February last year.

Last week as he opened Midland Metropolitan University Hospital, in Smethwick in the West Midlands, and visited one of its acute care elderly wards, he told cancer patient Matthew Shinda, "I'm not too bad", when asked about his health.

FABULOUS DAY: Joanna Lumley

Wills and Kate split allegiances as they watch rugby home nations take on world

HAVING LAUGH: Kate in Brighton

By **Jon Coates**

SPORTING rivalries were centre stage yesterday as the Prince and Princess of Wales cheered on the home nations at different Women's Rugby World Cup matches.

William, 43, watched Wales take on Fiji at the Sandy Park stadium in Exeter. They lost 28-25 but had already been knocked out of the championship, having lost their previous two outings.

Kate, also 43, attended the clash between England and Australia at Brighton & Hove Albion's Amex Stadium.

She looked radiant in a navy blue jacket and trousers, with a ruffled cream top, and watched the match with Jonathan Webb, vice-chair of the Executive Board of World Rugby and Bill Sweeney, CEO of the Rugby Football Union.

The Prince, *below*, who wore a navy blue suit and tie with a white shirt, is patron of the Welsh Rugby Union while the Princess holds a similar position with the RFU.

On Friday, the couple paid tribute to Katharine, Duchess of Kent, who died at home on Thursday aged 92.

Union flags were lowered to half-mast at Buckingham Palace and at royal homes other than Balmoral, where the King is in residence.

BUSY: Prince Harry

Harry will do rounds on UK trip

THE Duke of Sussex is to undertake a series of engagements on his visit to the UK this week.

Harry, 40, who retired from working royal life in 2020, is in London for the Wellchild Awards tomorrow, then on Tuesday he will head to Nottingham to support for BBC's Children in Need.

The California resident will visit a community recording studio he last went to in October 2019.

It is unknown whether Harry, who is estranged from his brother William, will see the King, having last met him in February.

SERVICE: Katharine

Catholic funeral for Duchess

THE Duchess of Kent's funeral will take place at Westminster Cathedral a week on Tuesday, Buckingham Palace announced yesterday, *writes Emily Ferguson*.

Katharine, wife of the late Queen's cousin the Duke of Kent, died peacefully at home late on Thursday, surrounded by her close family.

The service on September 16 will be the first Catholic funeral held for a member of the Royal Family in modern British history.

The King will attend and is expected to be joined by the Queen and other senior royals.

ACHING FOR HELP: Would-be patients queue at dentist in Bristol yesterday

Dentist pulls huge crowds

AROUND 150 people queued outside a dental surgery when it announced it would be taking on new NHS patients.

The centre was open for registrations from 8am and had four receptionists waiting to process the hopefuls.

Lodge Causeway Dental Centre, in Fishponds, Bristol, recently hired three dentists, hoping this will allow them to take on as many as 3,000 new patients.

The scenes echoed those at St Pauls Dental, also in Bristol, in February. The British Dental Association said up to one four people in the city have “unmet NHS dental needs”.

It added polling shows a lack of NHS care has led 26% of Britons to resort to DIY dentistry and 19% to seek help abroad.

HMRC hotline delays prevent small firms paying tax

FROM PAGE ONE

target elderly and vulnerable people with winter fuel payment cuts or plan to bring in the equally unpopular inheritance tax hikes for farmers to fund Labour policies.

It has emerged up to four million calls to a hotline for people attempting to pay their tax bill are not picked up.

Many come from owners of small businesses, who struggle with complex tax rules because they don’t have the accounts departments employed by larger firms.

These small and medium enterprises account for £28billion of the £46.8billion in unpaid tax revenue.

This revelation has been met with incredulity by MPs. Labour’s Liam Byrne, who is chair of the House of Commons Business Committee, said: “Nearly £47billion of tax that’s owed is not collected yet when businesses pick up the phone to get things right, millions of calls simply go unanswered.”

‘Not enough funding to answer phone calls’

Ms Reeves is reported to be considering a range of punitive taxes on property or inheritance in the run-up to her second Budget on November 26.

But a senior tax office official said the agency was not given enough funding to answer every call.

Jonathan Athow, HMRC’s director general of customer strategy and tax design, told MPs it had a target of answering 85% of phone enquiries. “That’s what we’re funded now to do. We are pretty close to those levels. I think we’re about 83%,” he added.

Asked how many calls went unanswered, he told the Commons Business Committee: “At the top of my head, we’re talking maybe three or four million calls potentially.

“I’m just trying to think through how the numbers flow through our system, because they are triaged and people are allowed to work out what they want to do, whether they want to wait for somebody or not. But of those people who indicate, it’s probably three to four million calls unanswered.”

TANTAMOUNT TO INDIFFERENCE: Labour’s Liam Byrne

HMRC figures show £46.8billion went uncollected in the 2023-24 financial year with 60% owed by small businesses. It includes unpaid corporation tax and National Insurance.

Mr Byrne said: “Three to four million calls lost each year is not just inefficiency, it is tantamount to indifference. It is a system that punishes those who try to play by the rules, while letting slip a £28billion gap from small businesses. That is not fair.”

Tina McKenzie, who is policy chair for the Federation of Small Businesses, said: “Small firms spend a huge amount of time and money on tax compliance every year – nearly £25billion and over 240 million hours every year, spread across the small business community.

“Dealing with HMRC can be a major source of headaches for small businesses, with less than a quarter of those who had contacted HMRC by phone over the previous two years rating their experience as good.”

But last night, a HMRC spokesperson said: “We successfully handle millions of customer queries every month, mostly online, and the Government is investing £500million in our digital services so more and more people can sort their tax affairs without having to wait on the phone.”

OPINION: PAGE 14

OPPOSITES ATTRACT: McDonald

Trevor: Iron Lady was so generous to me

By **Tony Whitfield**

FORMER News at Ten anchor Sir Trevor McDonald came to like Margaret Thatcher “enormously” despite being political opposites.

Sir Trevor became a national figure on the ITN flagship news show for 16 years but fell out with the Iron Lady when he interviewed her about sanctions on South Africa.

When she left No 10 his bosses wanted her to appear on the programme but he was reluctant to approach her as “I had a bit of a disagreement with her.”

He recalled: “I went down to see her, and she looked at me and raised those lovely eyes she had, and she said, ‘I’ll only come back because it’s you.’ And I thought that was an act of great generosity. I was always appreciative of that.

“My friends are rather surprised when I say this, because our politics were not very similar, but I came to like her enormously.”

NEW FACE: Matt Tebbutt

MasterChef rookie judge after Gregg

SATURDAY Kitchen host and chef Matt Tebbutt will replace Gregg Wallace as a judge on MasterChef: The Professionals.

Tebbutt, 51, called it "an absolute honour" to join "titans of the food world" Marcus Wareing, 55, and Monica Galetti, 50, as a judge on the culinary contest's 18th series.

He said: "I look forward to them taking me under their wing and seeing the chefs get off to a flying start in the competition."

BBC One and iPlayer will show the series at a date yet to be confirmed.

Wallace, 60, was sacked as a result of misconduct allegations from his time co-hosting amateur series MasterChef, as well as the spin-off for professionals and Celebrity MasterChef.

DUO: Maria and Mercury

Surfer dad is killed by 20ft shark

A SURFER killed by a "huge" shark in Australia screamed "don't bite me!" seconds before the attack.

Mercury Psillakis, 57, who leaves behind his wife, Maria, and a young daughter, was with six friends when he lost both his legs after a large shark targeted him at Long Reef Beach, Sydney, shortly after 10am local time yesterday.

His friends made it out the water and Mr Psillakis was brought to shore but died on the beach.

Mark Morgenthal said the shark was 20ft long.

"There was a guy screaming, 'I don't want to get bitten, don't bite me!,' and I saw the dorsal fin of the shark come up, and it was huge," he said.

'This Government of human rights lawyers is prepared to...throw veterans to wolves'

RESPECT: Mark Francois chats with soldiers preparing for deployment to Afghanistan

THE BIG INTERVIEW

By David Williamson

CHIEF POLITICAL COMMENTATOR

BREXIT warrior Mark Francois is at the heart of a new battle to protect veterans of the Armed Forces who served in Northern Ireland from being hauled from their homes to face vexatious prosecutions.

The Shadow Defence Minister was a leading member of the "Spartans" – the MPs who fought to stop Britain signing up to a deal they believed would betray the millions of citizens who voted to leave the EU.

Now he is on the parliamentary front line again, opposing Labour's plan to scrap a law passed by the last government to protect veterans from prosecution.

A petition opposing the changes attracted more than 195,600 signatures – and Mr Francois warns of serious consequences for Labour if former soldiers are "thrown to the wolves".

He said: "My message to the Prime Minister would be: You're in enough trouble as it is. You've angered all sorts of different sections of the electorate, from pensioners to farmers. Don't take on the veterans as well."

Mr Francois believes Irish republicans are on a mission to rewrite history – and he warns that "lawfare" will crush morale in the Armed Forces community and dissuade people from serving at a time when Britain needs a strong military.

The so-called Legacy Act was fiercely opposed by people in both communities in Northern Ireland but Mr Francois argues that axing it will "put the sword of Damocles back over" the heads of those who risked their lives serving during the Troubles.

The 60-year-old also fears its repeal could pave the way for the likes of former Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams to win compensation for being interned, although the Government has pledged to take action.

He believes divisions have opened up between the Ministry of Defence and the Northern Ireland Office, and is encouraged there are signs that "Labour MPs are getting very nervous about this".

"If they carry on with this, fewer people will join the Army and more people will leave," he warned. "Because why would you want to join the Army and fight for your country if 50 years later you could end up in a courtroom being cross-examined on what you were doing when you were 20 years of age?"

Northern Ireland Secretary Hilary Benn has told MPs the London and Dublin governments are "close" to striking a new agreement on dealing with the legacy of the Troubles.

Mr Francois said: "You've got a Government of human rights lawyers who, because of their almost religious faith in the Human Rights Act, are prepared to sacrifice our veterans – and that's not right."

Basildon-raised Mr Francois joined the Territorial Army at university and has an MA in War Studies but his concern for the Armed Forces was fostered much earlier.

His father, Reginald, served as a 19-year-old stoker on a minesweeper supporting the D-Day landings.

"Picture me literally at my father's knee, listening him to him talking about it," he said.

"He wasn't jingoistic about it or anything – completely the opposite. He kept talking about how many men had died that day to liberate us from Nazi tyranny... He absolutely drummed into me to never, ever take living in a free country for granted."

His dad died when Mr Francois was 14 but this passion to defend freedom and sovereignty has powered his career in politics. Having stood against Labour hardliner Ken Livingstone in 1997, he won the Essex seat of Rayleigh in 2001.

"I've always believed that the first duty of governments, above all others, is the defence of the realm," he said.

He views this responsibility with a new urgency following Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. "The reality now is the Ukrainians are effectively fighting for us," he said.

"They're fighting for Western values and if they lose then Putin will keep coming. If you go to the Baltic states or Poland, they are very, very conscious of the Russian threat."

It is a mistake to see the Russian president as a madman, he argues, saying: "He is rational but utterly brutal, so we have to be clear-eyed about what we're dealing with."

He is concerned that if Northern Ireland veterans are not protected from prosecution this will hit the morale of today's elite soldiers, warning of "particular anxiety in the special forces community".

"Special forces soldiers, who are not shrinking violets, are very concerned about what will happen to them if the Labour Government press on," he said.

MR FRANCOIS does not shy away from a scrap – either with Labour or his own party on subjects close to his heart. His readiness to vote against Theresa May's Brexit deal marked him out as one of Parliament's most committed Brexiteers, and he went on to chair the European Research Group –

Picture: HUMPHREY NEMAR

CARRY ON DEFENDING DEMOCRACY
#STOPTHECOUP
BETTER TOGETHER

‘Special forces soldiers are very concerned about what will happen if the Government press on.’

MARK FRANCOIS

VALUES: Shadow Defence Minister Mark Francois. Above, challenged by an anti-Brexit protester in Westminster in 2020

a bastion of opposition to EU influence on British life. Looking back on the battles to deliver a Brexit which honoured the referendum result, he said: “We thought, ultimately, what was at stake – I hope this doesn’t sound pompous – was the democratic principle itself.”

Today, he fears Sir Keir Starmer is “trying to take us back into the EU by stealth”.

“They’ll never risk another referendum,” he said. “What they will do is they’ll try to take us in quietly, bit by bit.

“We watched Starmer in action night after night, week after week for over two years in Parliament, conspiring with people across the House of Commons to try to keep us in the EU at almost any cost.

“I’ve seen this man in action and I’m here to tell you, Keir Starmer remains a Remainer and always will.”

SOME Conservative Brexiteers from this era have now joined Reform UK. Mr Francois argues the Conservatives made a critical mistake in their relationship with Nigel Farage after he helped Boris Johnson win the 2019 landslide.

“This all goes back to 2019 when Nigel Farage stood down what were his then-Brexit Party candidates which allowed Boris to win an 80-seat majority and we never said thank you,” he said.

“There was all this talk about ‘Should we have given Nigel a knighthood or a peerage?’. We never even gave him lunch. That was wrong.

“To this day they’re still angry about that and I understand that anger.”

Now the Conservative Party is in a battle for survival, with Reform UK enjoying a mighty lead in the polls. But the next general election is years away and in the meantime Mr Francois is determined to defend the interests of those who defend the realm.

He expects a crunch vote may come in the run-up to Christmas and has direct advice for Sir Keir: “Prime Minister, these men defended us against terrorists. They served their country.

“Do not throw them to the wolves just to do Gerry Adams a favour.”

A Government spokesman defended the plans to replace Conservative legislation, despite fears it will put long-retired Northern Ireland veterans at risk of prosecution and could trigger demands for compensation for people interned during the Troubles.

He said: “The previous government’s Legacy Act has been found to be unlawful in a number of respects by our domestic courts and was widely rejected by families who lost loved ones to paramilitary violence, including the families of Armed Forces personnel who were killed by terrorists.

“This Government’s approach aims to ensure that legacy cases are dealt with sensitively, efficiently and lawfully, and that the concerns of veterans are addressed through lawful and practical protections.

“We will address the complex issues relating to compensation for historic interim custody orders in forthcoming legislation.”

Defence plan ‘will put focus on jobs’

By **Marco Giannangeli**

BRITISH jobs and skills will be at the heart of a sweeping Defence Industrial Strategy to be launched this week.

Five new Defence Technical Excellence Colleges will be created to train the workforce needed for the future.

The plan, backed by a £182million investment, is designed to equip young people, veterans and mid-career workers with skills ranging from submarine engineering to cyber warfare.

Thousands of short courses will help defence employers to upskill recruits faster.

And £80million will be invested in universities to expand places in engineering and computer science.

‘We are tearing up the old rulebook’

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer trailed the strategy during a visit to BAE Systems’ Scotstoun shipyard in Glasgow.

It was celebrating a £10billion deal with Norway for Type 26 frigates that will support 4,000 British jobs.

Applications for the colleges will open later this year, with the first expected to launch in 2026.

Defence Secretary John Healey said: “Our Defence Industrial Strategy puts skills at the heart of plans to make the country safer and boost jobs across the UK.

“This is the biggest defence skills plan in decades.

“We are tearing up the old rulebook, slashing red tape, unlocking delays and cutting waste in Whitehall that for too long has stifled progress.”

NHS makes meal of hiring new staff

By **Mark Branagan**

"BOX-ticking" health chiefs have been slammed over forms asking all job applicants bizarre questions about their childhood – including if they had free school meals.

Among the sections of the form, shared with us by someone seeking a NHS job, is the question: "Were you eligible for free school meals at any time?"

Applicants are advised, "The information collected will be confidential and used for statistical purposes only. The employer will not use it to identify you."

Other questions include, "What was the occupation of the main earner in your household when you were 14?"

Darwin Friend, of the TaxPayers' Alliance, said: "While patients are stuck on waiting lists, NHS bosses are more concerned about box-ticking than hiring staff and treating patients." He urged them to focus on recruiting carers and doctors the NHS "desperately needs".

An NHS spokesperson said: "Applicants aren't obliged to share any information they don't want to and responses will not be used for screening." The Department of Health declined to comment.

BOX-TICKING: Darwin Friend

We offer advanced eye health scanning for £10 or less nationwide

Which can detect certain eye health conditions, like glaucoma, up to 4 years earlier

To experience the care our experts can give, book an eye test today

Specsavers

Additional charge of £5 or £10 applies for OCT advanced eye health scan in addition to the cost of a standard eye test. OCT not included in an NHS funded eye test. Prices vary per store. Ask in store for details.

Less than half of primary schools employ a nurse

Key medical roles are slashed

EXCLUSIVE

By **Lucy Johnston** SOCIAL AFFAIRS EDITOR

FEWER than half of the primary schools in England now have a school nurse, rising to just over two-thirds of secondary schools.

A new landmark census will tomorrow reveal the number of schools with nurses has fallen by a third since 2009.

Meanwhile just over one in 10 primaries, and a third of secondary schools, now has an on-site vaccination clinic.

It comes after the UK Health Security Agency last week said a baby had died of whooping cough after her mother was not vaccinated while pregnant.

And in July a child died from measles at the Alder Hey Hospital in Liverpool, which was blamed on the poor uptake for the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine.

None of the main childhood vaccines in England reached the uptake target of 95% last year, official records show.

Just 72.6% of pregnant women were vaccinated against whooping cough, while only 83.7% of five-year-olds received both MMR jabs.

It follows government warnings about low uptake, as well as an increase in vaccine hesitancy.

The first study of its kind, carried out by Children's Commissioner Dame Rachel de Souza, showed that just 44% of primary schools now have a school nurse, rising to 68% of secondaries.

Only 13% of primaries and 37% of secondaries provide on-site vaccination clinics.

VITAL: Jabs given to a pupil but vaccination rates are now down

Nurses are more common in deprived areas, where 48% of primaries and 81% of secondaries have them.

But the report says this still underplays their importance in checking vaccination books, spotting health problems early, supporting at-risk children and being the person pupils turned to in times of crisis. Dame Rachel said: "We're seeing a frightening but preventable fall in children's health outcomes, as well as in vaccination rates, and children and families have spoken to me about long delays in accessing healthcare services. This is not

SUPPORT: Despite so many being axed due to budget cuts, school nurses play a vital role

despite vaccine snub fuelling a rise in viruses

RISK: Alder Hey Hospital, where a child has died of measles; right, Dame Rachel de Souza

just a public health concern but a failure to uphold children's rights."

She added: "Many of us who grew up in previous generations remember the school nurse as a central and trusted member of staff; the person we visited when we were at our most vulnerable.

"As a minimum, I want every school to have access to a school nurse, educational psychologist, mental health support team and family support officer so that escalation to secondary services can occur when deemed appropriate."

A Birmingham headteacher, who did not want to be named, said: "We pay for a school nurse one day a week. She used to do EpiPen, allergy and asthma training. She has been here for years, knows families, remembers issues. Other schools in the consortium have cut her."

The whooping cough death of a baby, which occurred between January and June 2025, is the first fatal case of whooping cough in the UK this year. But 11 infants died from the illness last year.

The child who died at Alder Hey Children's Hospital is believed to be the second in England to die of measles in the past five years.

The hospital said the highly contagious virus is on the rise among young people in the region and it has seen a surge in "seriously unwell" children being admitted.

It said it would not comment on individual cases. The Sunday Times reported the child was ill with measles and other health issues.

Seventeen children have been treated at Alder Hey for measles since June.

Urging parents to ensure they and their children get essential vaccinations, a spokesman for the Government said: "We're taking decisive action to improve vaccination uptake.

"Local communities across the country will receive funding for public health services in their areas, including family and school nurses, thanks to a nearly £200million boost in funding."

Scandals spark fear of childbirth on NHS

By **Lucy Johnston**

ALMOST half of women in Britain fear giving birth following repeated NHS maternity scandals – and more than a quarter are delaying pregnancy as a result, research shows.

The figures follow four official inquiries into poor care on Britain's maternity wards which found hundreds of babies and mothers died or were harmed due to hospital failings.

And data shows the birth rate for England and Wales is at a record low after falling for the third year in a row.

Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson has said the declining rate of births has "worrying repercussions" and she hoped to be able to make it easier for women to have children.

Now in a new study, 46% of the women aged 20 to 40 quizzed said maternity unit scandals had made them more afraid of childbirth.

More than a quarter admitted delaying getting pregnant as they do not feel their local NHS unit is safe, while 45% now trust doctors and midwives less.

The survey of 1,000 women, ordered by Lime Solicitors, found 24% no longer believed their local maternity unit was safe.

This fear was most acute among the youngest polled, with 31% of 20 to 25-year-olds delaying pregnancy due to safety concerns.

Last year an all-party parliamentary birth trauma inquiry concluded "good quality care is the exception rather than the rule," with services frequently found to be "shockingly poor".

And the charities Tommy's and Sands found 2,500 babies' lives could have been saved since 2018 if the NHS had met its own safety targets.

Health Secretary Wes Streeting has ordered a national investigation into maternity safety, to report in December. Experts blame poor training, under-staffing and defensive cultures.

A NHS spokesman said: "We know for some women the care we provide is not as good as we want it to be and there remains much more to do, which is why we are committed to listening and learning from women and families...so every woman has the safe, compassionate care they deserve."

'Good quality care is the exception'

SORROW: Hazha Ghafoor at the grave of her child Maily

'She was in pain and scared'

HAZHA GHAFOOR, 39, from Birmingham, lost her daughter Maily in September 2023 after repeated warnings were missed during her high-risk pregnancy.

Despite a history of ectopic pregnancies, pre-eclampsia and gestational diabetes, Hazha's concerns about pain and reduced movements were not escalated by staff.

By the time doctors acted, Maily had died from a placental abruption – a complication that should have been picked up earlier.

"Nobody was there to fight for her when she needed help the most," said her husband Bahroz. "She was in pain, she was scared, and I had to fight to be able to stay there to make sure she was heard."

At home, Maily's nursery remains untouched. "The room is still ready for her. Hazha hasn't even opened the door," Bahroz said.

The NHS trust has admitted Maily would have survived with proper care. The family, now parents to a premature baby girl born this summer, are taking legal action.

Palestine protests turn ugly

By **Jaymi McCann**

POLICE and pro-Palestine protesters were involved in violent clashes yesterday.

Tempers flared as 150 supporters of banned terror group Palestine Action were arrested, including a disabled blind man in a wheelchair in London's Parliament Square.

Police drew their batons and one protester was seen with blood streaming down his face after being detained.

To chants of "shame on you" and "you're supporting genocide" from the 1,500-strong crowd, officers also picked up an 89-year-old woman holding a placard that read "I oppose genocide, I support Palestine Action".

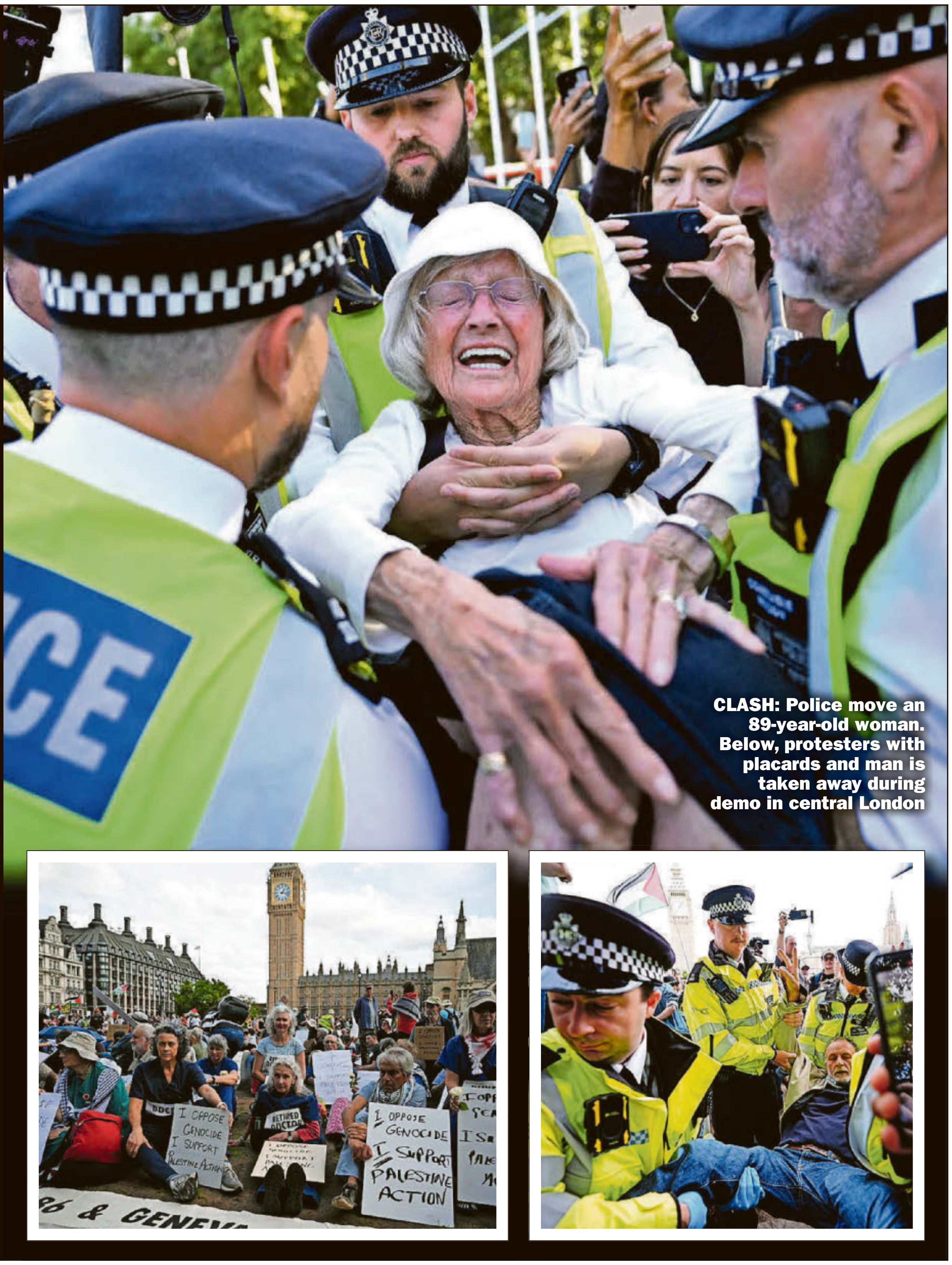
'Police carry off 89-year-old'

The Met Police said the arrests were for offences including assaulting a police officer and supporting a banned organisation.

It said there had been "a co-ordinated effort to prevent officers carrying out their duties which has included physical and verbal abuse".

Rallies also took place in Belfast and Edinburgh.

Six people alleged to be members of Defend Our Juries, or working closely with it, appeared before Westminster magistrates on Thursday. They denied charges including attempting to organise mass gatherings with the aim of rendering the Palestine Action ban unenforceable.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I OPPOSE GENOCIDE I SUPPORT PALESTINE ACTION
I OPPOSE GENOCIDE I SUPPORT PALESTINE ACTION
& GENEV

CLASH: Police move an 89-year-old woman. Below, protesters with placards and man is taken away during demo in central London

UK 'will reward terror' if martyrs' pay goes on

By **David Williamson**
CHIEF POLITICAL COMMENTATOR

BRITAIN risks rewarding terrorism if it recognises Palestinian statehood without demanding an end to "payments for murder", the Government has been warned.

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer has said the UK will recognise the state of Palestine this month unless Israel agrees to a ceasefire in Gaza and revives the prospect of a two-state solution.

Critics of the Palestinian Authority have accused it of running a "pay for slay" fund with payments to martyrs – families of Palestinians imprisoned or killed by Israel's forces.

In February, after long-standing pressure from the US, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas issued a decree overturning the payments system.

But there are concerns that militants continue to benefit from support. Conservative MP Katie Lam said: "The Prime Minister's plan to recognise a Palestinian state rewards terrorism. Not only does it leave Israeli hostages to the cruelty of Hamas, it legitimises the worst acts of the Palestinian Authority.

"It is nonsensical that the UK would do this without demanding the PA end its sickening payments for murder and terrorism. Labour hasn't just lost its moral compass, it has lost the plot." A Foreign Office spokeswoman said: "We welcome the vital progress made by the PA to reform prisoner payments.

"The PA must now ensure an independent audit verifies that the reforms have been completed.

"Alongside our partners, the UK will continue to support the PA as it delivers its important reform agenda."

Lord Walney, a former government adviser on political violence, said the authority had an "appalling record of glorifying and financially rewarding acts of terrorism" and argued that British taxpayers would be "horrified" to learn it is "now set to be gifted statehood".

He added: "The British Government cannot hope to tackle extremism at home if it rewards it abroad."

The Palestinian Mission to the UK was invited to comment.

CRITICISMS: PM Sir Keir Starmer and Katie Lam

DETERMINED: Chris Hoy

Gym is key for cancer fight: Chris

OLYMPIC cyclist Sir Chris Hoy has urged men with prostate cancer to be more active and help beat the side-effects of treatment.

Advanced prostate cancer affects some 20,000 men in the UK every year and hormone therapy is the main treatment.

But side-effects include weight gain, increased muscle loss and fatigue.

Sir Chris has terminal prostate cancer and last year was told he had two to four years to live.

Yesterday he launched a partnership with PureGym that offers prostate cancer sufferers getting hormone treatment free gym membership, and said: "I find it hugely encouraging the importance of exercise for prostate cancer is being recognised."

REVEAL: Alex and Perrie

A 2nd Little one due for Mixer Perrie

FORMER Little Mix singer Perrie Edwards and her footballer fiancé have told fans they are expecting their second child.

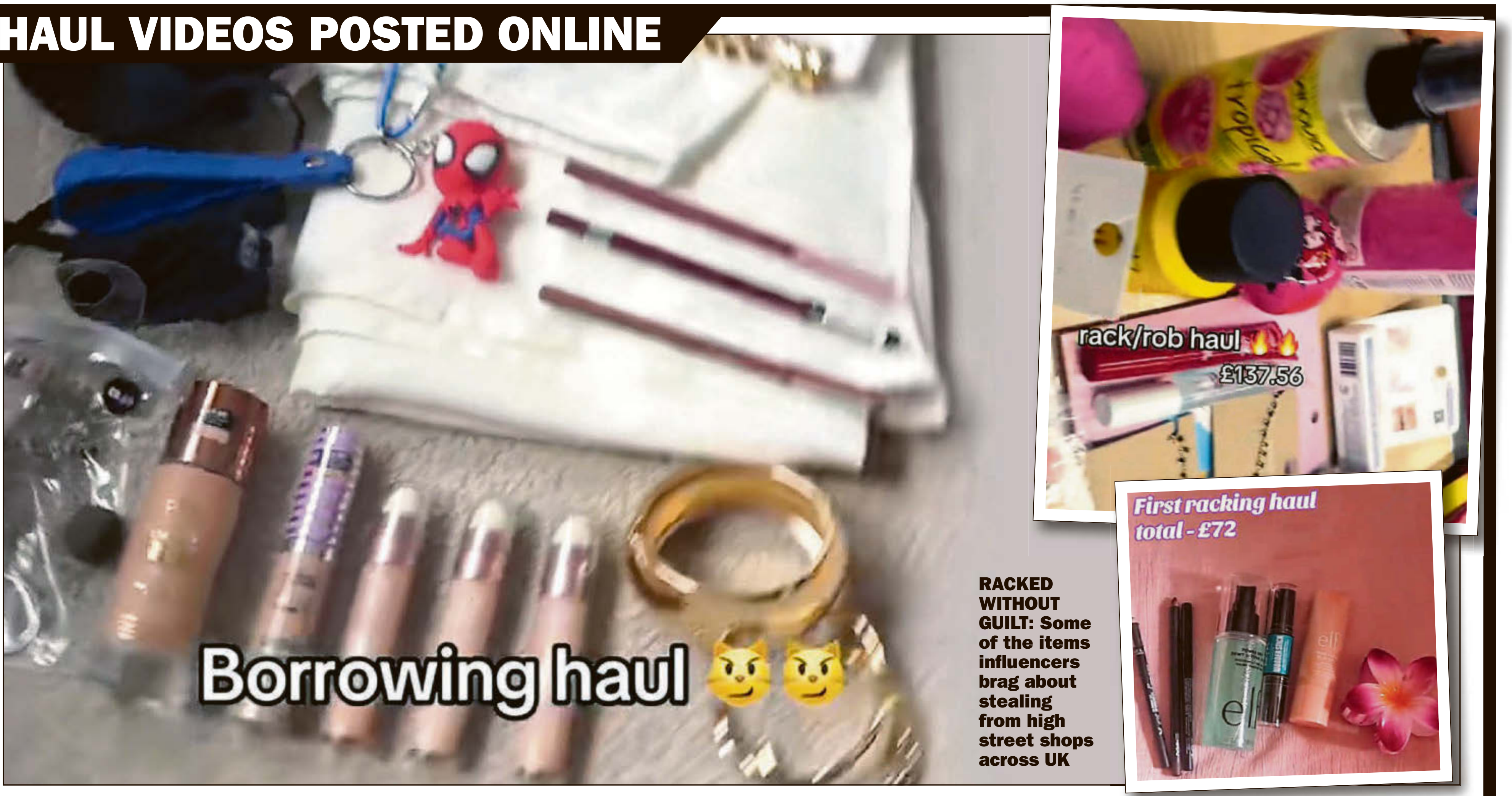
Perrie, 32, who has had two previous miscarriages, posed in a clip with Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, 32.

The lyrics to her new single If He Wanted To He Would featured on her cropped T-shirt as she revealed her baby bump.

The words "And he did" came up before Alex, also 32, walked in to give her a hug. Their son Axel, four, then came in to sweetly kiss his mum's belly.

Perrie has openly talked about having a miscarriage before Axel was born in August 2021, then another while rehearsing for Little Mix's final tour in 2022.

HAUL VIDEOS POSTED ONLINE



RACKED WITHOUT GUILT: Some of the items influencers brag about stealing from high street shops across UK

EXCLUSIVE

Thief-fluencers' viral shoplifting craze on TikTok

By **Paul Jeeves, Hannah Foley** and **Michael Knowles**

SHOPLIFTING "influencers" are encouraging others to steal by posting sickening online videos showing luxury goods they claim to have swiped from struggling retailers.

The Express has uncovered a vast collection of these videos on social media sites which experts say are influencing impressionable youths to go out and copy their "expeditions".

The videos are helping fuel a £2.2billion shoplifting epidemic across the UK with youths, middle class workers and even pensioners being encouraged to think of shoplifting as a "victimless crime".

The Express has launched our Stop The Shoplifters crusade with a call to arms for increased action from police and politicians to crack down on the national scourge.

EXPRESS CRUSADE STOP THE SHOPLIFTERS

Key to our campaign aim is a demand for police forces nationwide to agree to attend all reports of shoplifting.

The British Retail Consortium says this would ensure shop staff feel it is worthwhile reporting offences, while officers' attendance would act as a visible deterrent to thieves who feel they are almost guaranteed to get away without punishment.

But critics say there needs to be tighter policing of social media sites, both by police and the platforms.

The videos seen by the Express were found on TikTok – the most popular social media app for younger people – and are described as "racking".

One clip discovered within seconds of entering the search term shows an array of beauty products with the message "First racking haul £72".

Another expresses disappointment at having only stolen £132 of goods during a shoplifting expedition, while others describe how "easy" it is to escape with hundreds of pounds in stolen goods.

Many videos only show stolen goods with written text revealing the cost of the items had they been bought but there are also some brazen users who make videos of themselves wearing clothing, jewellery and make-up which they allege has been stolen.

And there is a large collection of other videos where people are not only encouraged to shoplift but given tips on how to steal, avoid detection and even told in explicit detail what a shoplifter should do if caught.

One video tells how "going with a friend makes it easier" and advocates wearing skin-tight clothing beneath baggy ones on top. This, the video claims, makes it easy to stuff stolen items where security guards are less likely to have the power to check.

The video also warns against taking an empty bag, then walking out with a full one because "that's really suspicious". Instead it tells users to take in half-full bags then buy small items for £1 or £2 to cover their tracks. Other tips being shared online including scanning for security cameras by pretending to take a selfie and talking to shop staff.

One video gives tips on what to do if alarms sound when leaving the shop.

The social media sites also have videos with advice on how to explain to parents the arrival of expensive goods at home.

The results of the Express probe has sparked fury over what government critics have branded "lawless Britain".

Matt Vickers, Shadow Home Office minister, said: "It is disgraceful that so-called influencers are glamorising and encouraging shoplifting while shop staff, retailers and consumers pay the price. Instead of wasting time policing tweets, the Government should be putting police back on our streets to crack down on shoplifting and keep communities safe."

Former Detective Chief Inspector David Spencer, who served in the Met before joining Policy Exchange, said: "These influencers should be serving lengthy prison terms for inciting others to go on crime sprees.

"These criminals are contributing to the feeling of lawlessness on our high streets. Policy Exchange has repeatedly called on ministers and chief constables to take this type of criminality seriously.

"Tragically, the Government's intention to scrap prison sentences of less than 12 months means it is almost guaranteed that these individuals will be permitted to continue their criminal lifestyle.

"What will it take for the Government to take the theft epidemic seriously?"

Reform UK MP Lee Anderson added: "Law and order in Starmer's Britain has become a joke. Openly bragging about your haul of ill-gotten gains is a slap in the face to ordinary Brits who play by the rules and pay their taxes every single day.

"Allowing this to go unchecked gives the impression that lawlessness is acceptable.

"The police need to crack down on this disgraceful trend and start getting a grip on genuine crime instead of spending their time investigating tweets."

A spokesman for TikTok said they treated the matter seriously and removed the vast majority of content – including videos flagged by the Express.

He added: "We do not allow content that facilitates or encourages criminal activities, including theft.

"In the first quarter of 2025, we removed 96.9% of content that violated our community guidelines around criminal behaviour before it was reported to us."

SHOPPERS PAY PRICE: MPs Matt Vickers, Lee Anderson

SUNDAY EXPRESS
OPINION

Give us a break and ring changes on tax

IF YOU experience worry and anger when you try and fail to get through to someone at HMRC you are not alone – not by a long shot.

Between three and four million calls to a helpline go unanswered. The fact that so many people try to call is testament to the bewildering nature of the rules and forms.

The wider scandal is that HMRC fails to collect billions in tax. The near-£47billion would go a long way to plugging the black hole at the heart of the public finances which endangers our economy and living standards.

We have the sorry spectacle of a hapless Chancellor trying to raise cash by launching raids on farming families and snatching winter fuel payments, when an effective taxation system would put the country on a sound financial footing and calm the markets.

At present, employers are being clobbered with a hike in NI contributions which endangers jobs and chokes off growth.

We need both a Government and a tax system which is founded on common sense.

Until that arrives, the very least ministers could do is ensure phone calls are answered.

Former Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner's high-flying political career has been grounded due to her failure to pay the full stamp duty she owed; ordinary people across the country deserve an HMRC which is not mired in needless complexity of a kind that only enriches clever accountants.

Reform on the rise

REFORM UK's conference gave the country a glimpse of what it looks like when Britons are excited about politics.

So many other gatherings of politicos are soulless affairs, dominated either by factional rivalry or the presence of corporate lobbyists.

But the activists who converged on Birmingham gave every indication of having a wonderful time.

It is not much fun to be a Labour minister, with people who have done nothing to distinguish themselves being rotated around Government roles by a desperate PM.

Nigel Farage is untested in Government but as an Opposition leader he has demonstrated the kind of panache Sir Keir never possessed.

Testing time for all

IN THESE days of international tumult and widespread anxiety, it is comforting to know the emergency alert which will sound from phones and tablets at 3pm today – even if they are set on silent – is merely a test.

We can ignore the siren-like sound and the sudden vibration, safe in the knowledge that the world is not ending.

Of course, it would be deeply ironic if an alien invasion took place at precisely this moment but if you are sitting in the garden when the alert rings out there is probably no need to interrupt your cup of tea.

Starmer relaunch stalls with wheels falling off again

HANDS UP: Angela Rayner's delayed departure prompted a desperate reshuffle

COMMENT

By Kevin Hollinrake
CONSERVATIVE PARTY
CHAIRMAN

KEIR STARMER promised Britain "change". What we actually got is the political equivalent of buying a dressed-up second-hand car with 200,000 miles on the clock. It looks shiny on the forecourt but the moment you drive it off the exhaust falls off, the brakes seize and the engine bursts into flames.

Barely a year in, his government has lurched from scandal to U-turn to crisis without ever finding anything resembling a steady gear.

Phase 2 of his premiership lasted about as long as a cheap Chinese clutch.

Announced with great fanfare, it collapsed within days when Angela Rayner – his supposed deputy and the self-styled voice of Labour "integrity" – careered into a ditch over dodgy tax affairs.

This, remember, was the woman who spent years wagging her finger at Conservatives, lecturing everyone else on probity and moral fibre. Yet when the spotlight turned on her, she turned out to be about as straight as a country B-road in North Yorkshire. One rule for her, another for everyone else.

And what of Starmer?

He just sat there in the driver's seat staring blankly at the dashboard lights flashing red, too timid to do anything decisive.

Eventually Rayner bailed out herself, leaving the Prime Minister looking like a learner driver abandoned on the hard shoulder, clutching the L-plates and wondering where it all went wrong.

Meanwhile, the rest of the country is not exactly enjoying the ride.

Remember when he declared he would "smash the gangs" and close all asylum hotels?

Well, Channel crossings are at record highs, hotels remain crammed with migrants and the Home Office is now taking Conservative councils to court for trying to shut down hotels housing convicted criminals.

You could not make it up. So much for law and order.

And then there's the economy. Spiralling prices, stubborn inflation and Rachel Reeves still parked in the Treasury revving up for another round of tax hikes. Their idea of growth is squeezing families and punishing businesses to pay for Labour's incompetence. Ask a small business owner in the Midlands or a working family in the North East whether they feel better off, and you'll get the same answer: not a chance.

> "Labour's response to every setback is identical: relaunch the relaunch, promise the earth, and deliver nothing"

Labour's response to every setback is identical: hit the reset button, relaunch the relaunch, hold another press conference, promise the earth and deliver absolutely nothing. It is Groundhog Day on steroids – the same tired slogans repackaged in glossy wrapping, with no substance underneath.

Contrast that with the Conservatives under Kemi Badenoch. We are not pratting about with "phases" and "resets". We have a clear plan: cut spending to lower taxes, protect the borders, back small businesses. In other words – deliver. Voters are crying out for honesty, competence, and common sense. That is what the Conservatives are offering.

And while Reform indulge in the political equivalent of Fantasy Economics FC – promising giveaways so vast they could not fund them if they sold every sausage roll in Greggs – we are focused on reality. Living within our means, fixing the economy and getting Britain back on the road is not flashy, but it is necessary.

That means unlocking our oil and gas in the North Sea rather than outsourcing our energy security to despots abroad.

It means passing a Deportation Bill tougher than reinforced concrete – one that actually sends dangerous criminals and illegal arrivals home, not one riddled with loopholes and caveats.

And it means saying no to the lunacy of Net Zero by 2050 when we cannot even guarantee how to keep the lights on by 2026.

STARMER'S Labour is falling apart at the seams: ministers distracted by scandals, a leader paralysed by indecision and policies that vanish faster than a budget airline refund.

Reform are scribbling wish lists in crayon. Their promises barely survive a day of scrutiny because they have no real plan.

Only the Conservatives are offering a serious, common-sense programme that will actually get this country moving again.

The British people are not mugs. They know the difference between a showroom polish and a genuine engine upgrade.

Starmer's vehicle is already sputtering in the slow lane, hazards flashing, while the nation waits for a proper driver to take the wheel.

That driver is Kemi Badenoch – and the Conservatives.

THE UNIVERSITY of Leicester has a Centre for Hate Studies (of course it does!) and having spent two years talking to just 115 people has concluded our countryside is not welcoming to non-white people.

Never mind questioning its validity based on the number of people that would only just fill a double decker bus while 10.9 million people actually live in rural areas, one of their assertions is not enough non-white people own Wellington boots.

Now I know why I 'hate" these Hate studies!

NICK FERRARI

Could Queen Camilla become the Met Commissioner?

Where was Sir Keir when duty called?

BY ANY measure, the Government's attempts to defend the indefensible position in which Angela Rayner landed herself over the last couple of weeks have been lamentable.

On Friday, after nearly two weeks of bluff and bluster and flim and flam, the Housing Secretary experienced her own eviction – and rightly so.

Her attempt to bend the rules over the purchase of her seaside apartment turned into an end of the pier show for "our Ange".

Tellingly, her swift demise from supposedly being the second most important elected politician in the country to being a national laughing stock has been mirrored by the catastrophic decline in any respect for the Prime Minister and his allies.

Consider this: Labour's defence strategy rested in part on this being an unfair attack on Rayner as she is "Northern and working class". Talk about a suicide note! Did it not occur to the skinny latte drinking, bento bowl munching Leftist elite who control Labour that they have managed to grossly disrespect most of their voting base?

Northern, working class and Labour go together like bread and butter or fish and chips. Or, in this instance, stamp duty and dodging.

My late mother was raised in Leicester but moved there at the age of four having been born in Barrow-in-Furness and there is no way on God's good earth she would have attempted to swerve paying a tax that was rightfully due.

While sadly I never knew her father, I have extremely fond memories of my Lancashire-born grandmother and can be equally adamant she would have been the same.

And don't let the other chaff being fired out by everyone from Sir Keir Starmer and Number 10, to the Chancellor and other senior Cabinet colleagues about this being based on inaccurate advice or a genuine mistake or to do with a property held "in trust" deflect you from the truth: Angela "Blamer" was caught with her manicured nails in the cookie jar and tried to blag her way out. Are we really meant to believe that if any of us found ourselves in conflict with a body such as HMRC or our local council we'd be able to get away with saying it's all down to duff advice?

LATEST, since signature, on that "ground-breaking" one-in, one-out, deal with the French concerning small boat migrants...
IN: 3,567
OUT: Zero
Enough said?

That the person at the very top of the housing department was unable to comprehend how it worked is beyond laughable.

How on earth can a woman bright enough to get to the role of Deputy Prime Minister not be able to follow guidance on her own departmental website?

Meanwhile, fellow ministers such as her hapless housing colleague Matthew Pennycook, as well as Stephen Kinnock and Stephen Morgan, were corralled into offering her their fulsome support and actually told me on air "there is no story here."

Between them, they'd struggle to edit a bus ticket.

ONE FACTOR yet to be fully addressed is the lasting damage that has been done to her boss, the Prime Minister.

It is chilling that the man supposedly running the country saw fit to abrogate responsibility as to whether his immediate deputy stays or goes to a third party, the ethics watchdog.

And this from the man who – God forbid – would have ultimate responsibility as to whether to fire nuclear weaponry.

You have to wonder, how many reviews, commissions and Government advisers would Sir Keir require to authorise that?

CARING: Chris Martin with Israeli fan, above, during Wembley show, right

DO NOT buy for a nano-second this confected tripe about Coldplay star Chris Martin "unnecessarily politicising" and "dehumanising" fans at one of his Wembley concerts last week.

This came after he invited two young Israeli girls to the stage to help perform a number and Martin said he welcomed them as he also welcomed Palestinians and all other nationalities.

I was fortunate to be at one of his concerts last week – admittedly not the one in question – and his concern and support for everyone is palpable.

Indeed, 40 years ago I was the rock and pop editor for a newspaper and saw everyone from Elton John in Sydney and A-ha in Los Angeles to Queen in Stockholm and Prince at the O2 and I have NEVER seen a performer so genuinely dedicated to the sensibilities of, and so much in touch with, his fans.

WHILE suggesting we are living in North Korea is baseless hyperbole, we should all be concerned at the arrest of comedy genius Graham Linehan at Heathrow last week. He is correct that it edges us towards being a police state.

A spokesman stresses the PM and Home Secretary both want police to concentrate on "reducing serious crime".

As they're in control, perhaps they'd like to do something about it then?

THE TORIES were once the most successful political party on the planet – how the mighty are fallen! Last week, Kemi Badenoch said something about North Sea oil on the same day the Green Party elected its new leader.

The fact the latter – a former hypnotherapist who once claimed women could raise breast sizes via the power of thought – got all the coverage tells you where the Tories find themselves.

Tune into Nick Ferrari at breakfast every weekday morning from 7am on LBC 97.3FM

Mike's a big name in the nick

By **Matthew Davis**

FORGET trendy names like Noah, Theo or Ava – the real crime wave in Britain is being orchestrated by Michaels, Davids and Johns.

Figures reveal the most common first names among inmates in England and Wales's prisons are overwhelmingly old-school, with Michael topping the list for male lags and Sarah leading the way for women.

Ministry of Justice statistics show that 1,798 prisoners were named Michael, followed closely by 1,790 Davids and 1,720 Daniels.

James, John, Paul and Mark also dominate the top 10 – a roll call that could have been plucked straight out of a 1980s classroom register.

For women, Sarah leads with 64 inmates, ahead of Emma, Rebecca and Lisa – again names that soared in popularity in the late 1970s and 1980s but are now in steep decline.

Experts say the trend reflects the age profile of the prison population. With the average age of male inmates at 38, today's jails are packed with men born in the 70s and 80s – when traditional Biblical or classic names were at their peak.

Kevin Moore, retired head of Sussex Police CID, said: "When you look at the prison lists, you're seeing the legacy of past baby-naming fashions. The names are all the ones I would come across although in their abbreviated form in that I was arresting people called Micky, Dave and Jimmy."

By contrast, the most popular baby names of today – Noah, Theo, Leo, Olivia, Ava, Isla – are nowhere to be seen in the jail roll call.

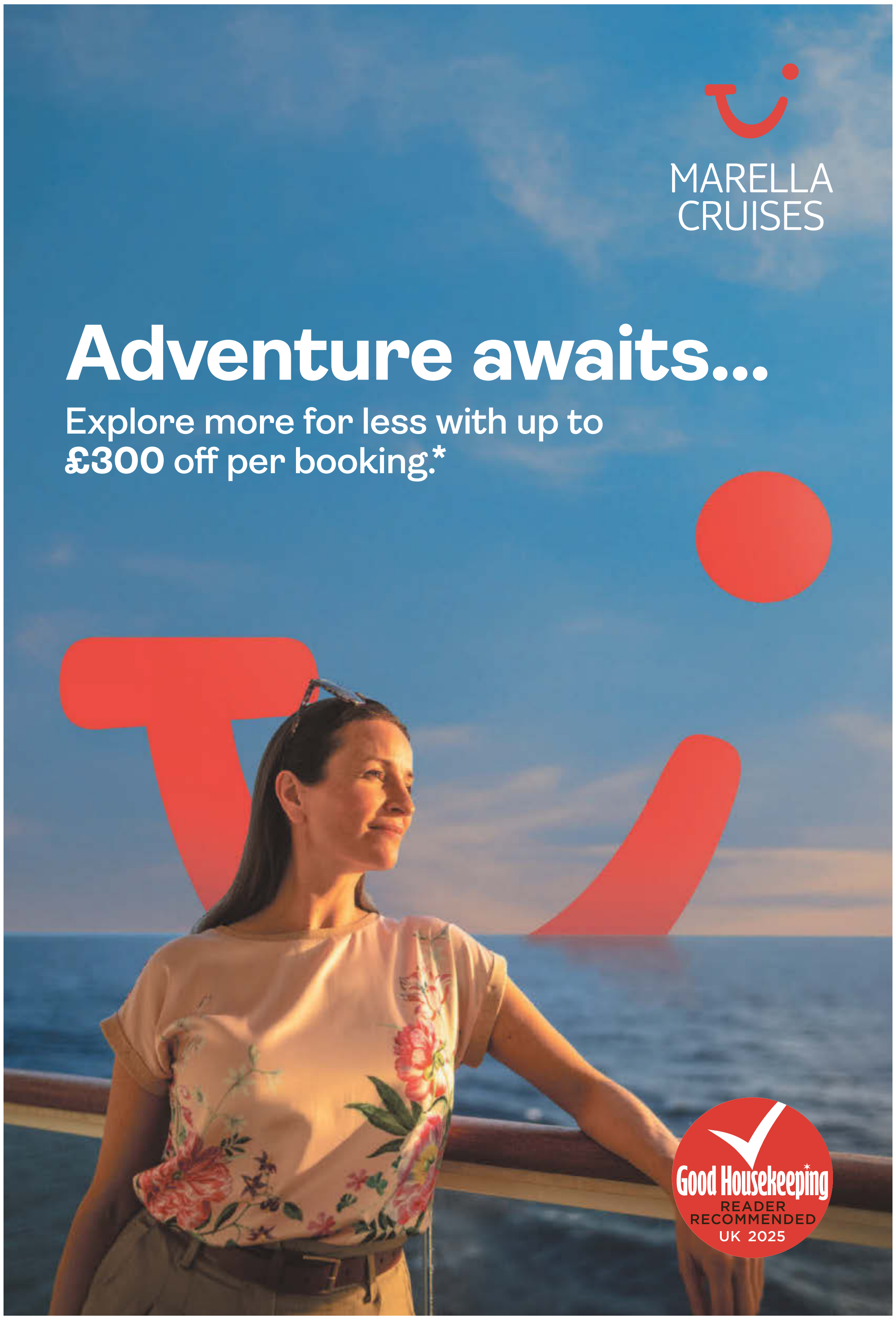
That means that for now, new mums and dads can breathe easy they don't appear in the "crime charts".

Real-life jailbird Michaels and Sarahs include Michael Boateng, 34, once a professional footballer with Bristol Rovers, who was jailed for 14 years in August after being caught with £2million worth of the drug methamphetamine, which is commonly known by the street name crystal meth.

And Sarah Panitzke, 51, once described as the UK's most-wanted woman, was sent to prison for eight years in 2022 for her part in a £1billion tax fraud.

She was then handed an additional nine-year sentence in 2023 for failing to pay back a £2.4 million confiscation order.

NAME GAME'S UP: For old-school monikers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Gwyn to scoop loot from Goop

LOOKING GOOD FOR BIG SALE: Gwyneth is set to sell her lifestyle brand for millions

By **Mike Parker**

GWYNETH Paltrow is poised to become Hollywood's next billionaire star – by selling her lifestyle brand Goop.

Friends claim she is ready to relinquish her online empire that sells a range of products from "wellness" cures to gold-plated adult toys.

A business source close to the 52-year-old Oscar-winning actress confirmed: "She believes it's time to let go – but only if the price is right.

"Gwyn will only walk away from the company she founded 17 years ago if she can cash in with the sort of massive deal accomplished by celebrities like Hailey Bieber and Reese Witherspoon."

The model wife of pop star Justin Bieber sold her beauty brand Rhode for £740million in May. Actress Reese sold her Hello Sunshine TV and film production company for about £670million four years ago.

The business source added: "Gwyneth has even asked the top brass at her Hollywood agency CAA to help her try to find a buyer with deep pockets."

The Iron Man star, whose Oscar was for Shakespeare in Love, will star in Marty Supreme, which opens in UK cinemas on Boxing Day.

A Goop spokesperson said: "We would not wish to comment on company plans."

EMILY in Palace

with Royal Editor EMILY FERGUSON

Revelations and resets for royals

I ALWAYS think of September as a month of new beginnings. It marks the end of the summer holidays and a time to return to our normal routines. While I'm not lucky enough to get the whole of the summer off work, I did enjoy some time in the South of France and returning to the commentary box for the Aviva National Bowls Finals in Leamington Spa.

Back in the office, with the royals enjoying some respite in Balmoral, I've been freed up to knuckle down on the tasks I've been putting off during the busy season.

I'm sure I am not the only one who gets the back-to-school feeling at this time of year, and with the royals returning to a busy diary of engagements they are bound to have hit the reset button as we head into a new season of events.

The Palace has also been brought sharply back into focus with the revelations made in another bombshell book on the Royal Family.

Former royal reporter Valentine Low will release the sequel to his bestselling book Courtiers on Thursday, and it's certainly set to get tongues wagging.

It has already been serialised at the author's former paper, The Times, with revelations about the late Queen Elizabeth being a Remainer, Queen Camilla fighting off an attempted indecent assault as a young woman, and the Government's determination to pump money into the King's Coronation in May 2023.

The book is a fascinating insight into the unique dynamics between the monarch and their Government and how the relationship has changed over time. It showcases the late Queen's love of political gossip and her connection to each of the 15 prime ministers she worked with under her historic reign.

As a former political reporter I was captivated throughout, as it discusses some of the great – both good and bad – political moments of the past century.

I can't reveal too much until the publication date, but it's certainly another triumph from Low after his first bestseller (which coincidentally was given to me as a leaving gift when I hung up my politics hat).

Picture: WIKTOR SZYMANOWICZ/GETTY

■ **A ROYAL summer just wouldn't be complete without a good old-fashioned tug o' war, caber tossing and a piping parade at the historic Princess Royal and Duke of Fife Memorial Park.**

I'm of course talking about the annual Braemar Gathering, which sees competitors participate in traditional Highland competitions. It's a staple for the Royal Family, as they don their tartan and watch the fun unfold.

■ *TOMORROW will be a tough day for the Royal Family, the nation, and the Commonwealth, as it marks three years since Queen Elizabeth II's death.*

The King and Queen are expected to visit Crathie Kirk, where the late Queen was a regular worshipper while in Scotland, for a service today as Charles continues his tradition of marking the solemn anniversary at Balmoral. Monday – which also marks his Accession Day – will be a moment of private reflection for him.

At 1pm, the bells at Westminster will ring out and gun salutes will be fired at the Tower of London, Hyde Park, Edinburgh Castle and Hillsborough Castle to mark the anniversary.

■ **LET'S hope the new season brings with it a fresh start for royal relations. We all know how keen Prince Harry is to move on from the sorry saga but the ball is very much in the King's court.**

Father and son will both be in the UK this week, as the Duke returns to London for the annual WellChild Awards ceremony. Charles, who was in Italy on a state visit the last time Harry flew over, will also be in the UK, in Scotland, at his Balmoral estate.

There are signs a meeting, albeit a brief one, will take place. It would be their first since Harry rushed home after the King's cancer diagnosis was made public last February.

But both sides are giving absolutely no indication that a date and time has been set, so we'll just have to wait to see how it pans out in the coming days.

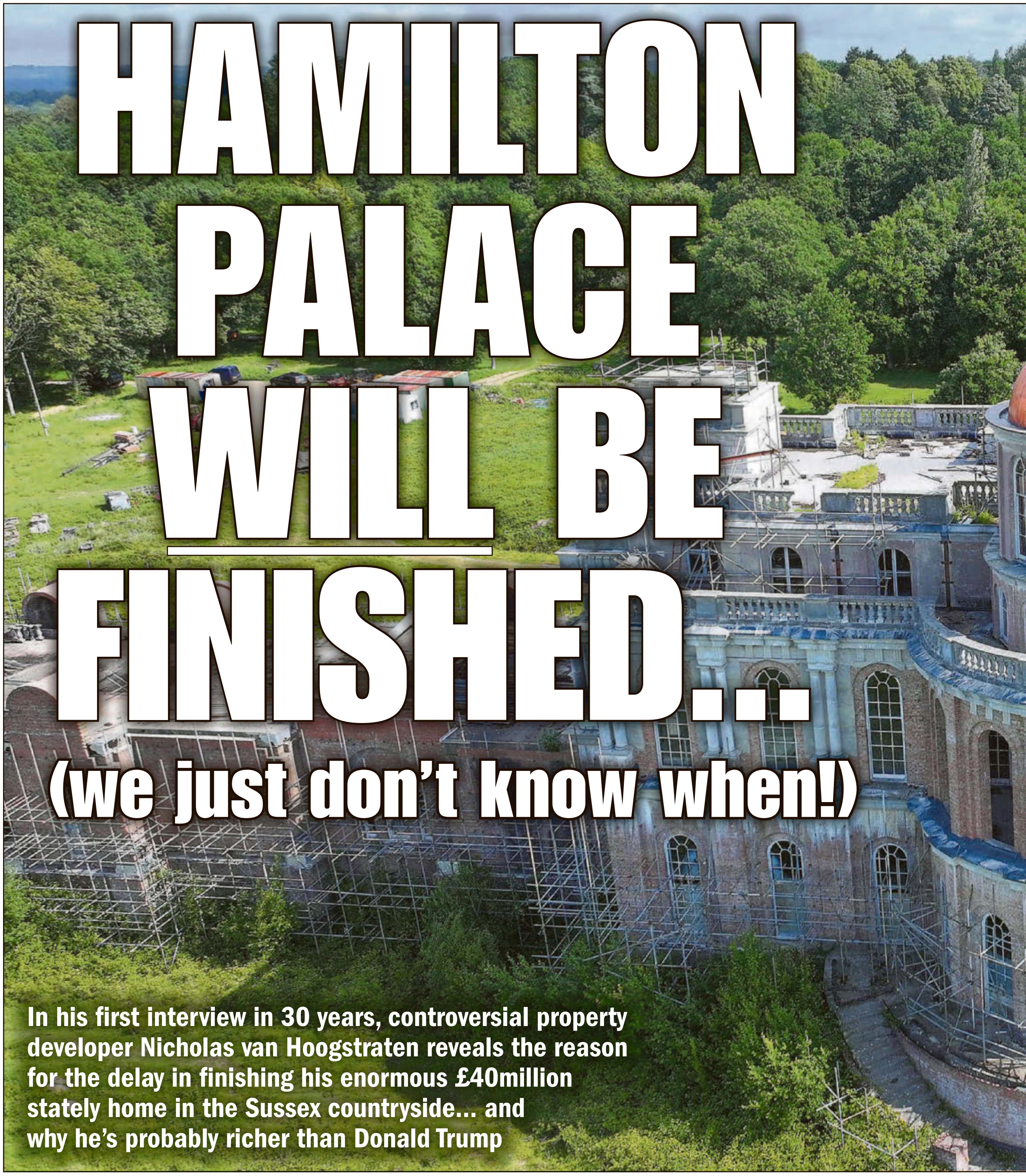
■ **EARLIER in the year we heard how the Princess of Wales wanted the focus to be on her work rather than her wardrobe. But despite her best efforts, the attention last week was not on what she wore but her hair colour.**

Kate, known for her luscious brunette hair, has returned from the summer with a new "bronde" look. We saw a glimpse of the makeover when she was snapped heading to church last month but Thursday's visit to the Natural History Museum marked the first time we got a proper look at the lighter locks.

It is understood that she returned from a sun-soaked holiday with naturally lighter hair. The Princess was a fan of the lighter hue and asked her stylist to enhance the colour with a balayage – a technique to create a graduated, natural-looking colour where the roots are left untouched.

The frenzy over the slight tweak to her appearance serves as a reminder that female royals are continuously scrutinised for how they look and it can't be easy.

Pictures: EDDIE MITCHELL



HAMILTON PALACE WILL BE FINISHED...

(we just don’t know when!)

In his first interview in 30 years, controversial property developer Nicholas van Hoogstraten reveals the reason for the delay in finishing his enormous £40million stately home in the Sussex countryside... and why he’s probably richer than Donald Trump

EXCLUSIVE

By **Zak Garner-Purkis**
INVESTIGATIONS EDITOR

NICHOLAS van Hoogstraten is perched on a windowsill in the reception of the modest hotel he owns in Hove, East Sussex. As we shake hands, I can tell he is distracted, irritated by a memory the heavily-pruned trees outside have stirred.

The bare trunks lining the back fence are the result of an employee trimming the branches a little too enthusiastically; which clearly annoyed Hoogstraten, who planted them to give hotel guests privacy.

“He was sacked on the spot,” he says grimly, taking a seat opposite a pool table. It’s impossible to tell if he’s joking, but I suspect not.

At a glance, it would be tough to tell the 80-year-old is a man of immense wealth. Back in his 80s heyday, he was rarely seen out of a double-breasted suit. Today, he’s dressed in a grey Karate Dojo gym T-shirt, trousers and trainers.

At the height of his fame – or should that be infamy? – Hoogstraten was known as “Britain’s most feared landlord”. Born into humble origins in Sussex, he started a property business on the profits earned from selling his childhood stamp collection. By his early 20s, he’d built an empire across the South Coast and gained a reputation for being a ruthless operator who acquired homes from people who were unable to pay back his high-interest loans.

So when he stares at me with a steely expression and says he hasn’t dealt with the press in three decades, I get a sense of why people were intimidated.

“I used to have a bucket of s*** and p*** by the front desk for throwing,” Hoogstraten continues. “That Bashir guy came unstuck when he came up here,” he says, referring to BBC journalist Martin Bashir. “He nearly got thrown off the scaffolding. The things we agreed that we wouldn’t discuss, he asked about.”

‘He nearly got thrown off the scaffolding’

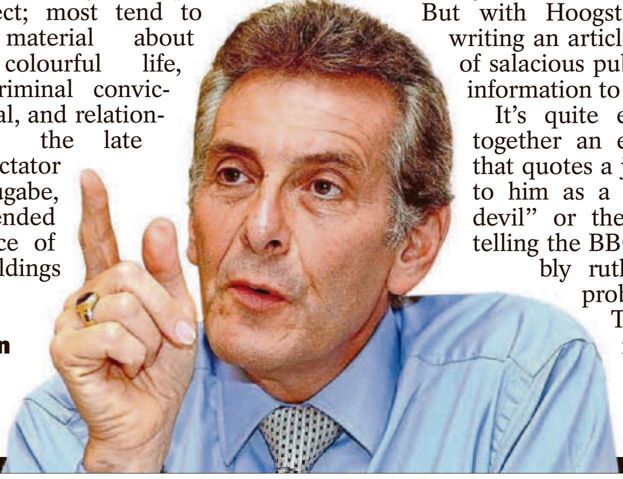
I’ve been spared a dousing in excrement because Hoogstraten and his son Max want to set the record straight about the one story that continues to generate huge public attention – the mystery of the family’s vast, unfinished mansion, Hamilton Palace.

Started in 1985, the grand neo-classical estate – set across 100 acres of rolling Sussex countryside – was designed as a throwback to a bygone era of Georgian opulence, complete with Romanesque columns and brass domes.

Had it been finished, the stately home would probably not have generated much interest, even though it would have been bigger than Buckingham Palace.

But the abrupt halting of work in the late 90s, just as it appeared to be nearing completion, has created a sense of mystery that has spawned hundreds, if not thousands, of articles and videos in the subsequent quarter of a century.

They rarely contain any new updates about the project; most tend to recycle old material about Hoogstraten’s colourful life, including his criminal convictions, murder trial, and relationship with the late Zimbabwean dictator Robert Mugabe, whom he befriended as a consequence of his huge land holdings in the country. But over the course of nearly two hours, Hoogstraten and Max break their three-decade silence to explain the exact reasons why work stopped and what the future holds for the palace.



NOT FOR SALE: Property tycoon Nicholas van Hoogstraten in 2004

Part of the reason articles on Hamilton Palace keep doing the rounds is nothing to do with the building; it’s the man. Often, with the ultra-wealthy, there is a limit to what we journalists can know or say.

But with Hoogstraten, anyone writing an article has a wealth of salacious publicly available information to draw from.

It’s quite easy to patch together an engaging story that quotes a judge referring to him as a “self-imagined devil” or the man himself telling the BBC: “I’m probably ruthless and I’m probably violent.”

The upshot is that Hoogstraten, who, throughout our conversation, makes it plain he is extremely distrustful of technology, is an online sensation. “[One of my tenants] told me every time my name appears on one of those computer things, it goes ‘boom’,” he says, gesturing to my phone.

“He wanted me to start a social media account and told me I could earn 10 grand a month. Why would I want to do that for 10 grand?”

THESE days, it tends to be his son, Max Hamilton, 40, who deals with issues relating to the Palace. His soft voice and round features contrast with his dad’s sharp tone and angular cheekbones. He explains to me, in a thoroughly polite manner, that the coverage is inviting intruders.

“The thing that annoys us is the amount of people we have trespassing and the excuse is always ‘we’ve read it’s abandoned’,” he says.

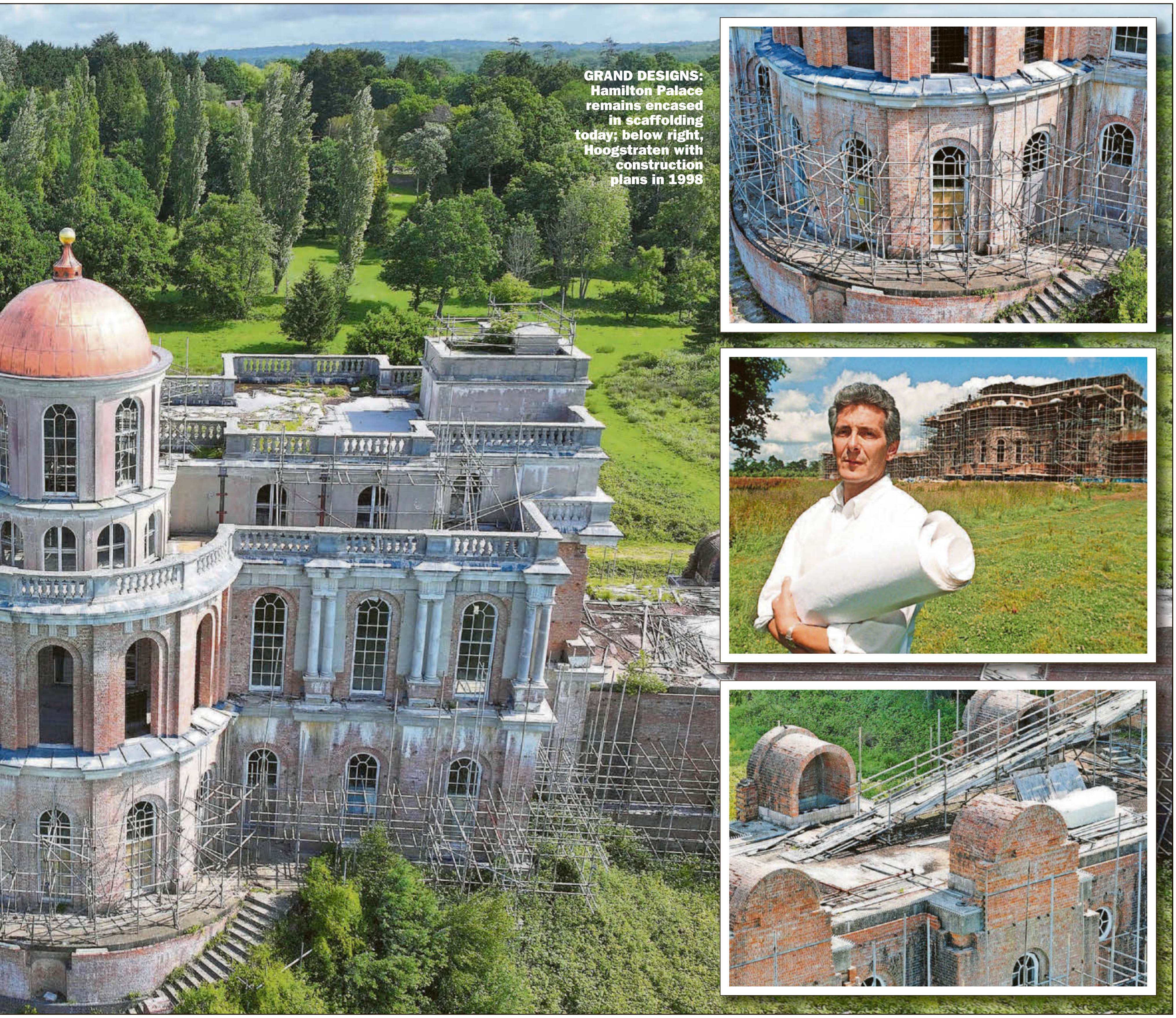
“But this is an estate that has staff, 24-hour security and things happening every single day.”

He says anyone who does make it on to the grounds would be in little doubt that this is a place they shouldn’t be. The gardens are maintained, there are hunts on the land, people live there and there are clear signs adorning the perimeter fence stating this is private property.

Those who make it closer to the building tend to have worse intentions, Max says. Thieves have targeted the unfinished building numerous times and the family regularly has to contact the police.

“It’s dangerous,” he adds. “These people are taking dangerous risks, and someone will eventually get hurt. It doesn’t help that the trespassing laws are nearly non-existent and the criminal damage [penalties] are weak.”

Despite the fact there are no ongoing building works or immediate plans, both Hoogstraten and his son maintain with utter conviction that the project will eventually be finished. There might be foliage snaking its way around the scaffolding but, in their eyes, renovations have only paused. Max



GRAND DESIGNS: Hamilton Palace remains encased in scaffolding today; below right, Hoogstraten with construction plans in 1998

can't give a time frame for when that might happen because "it's not on the agenda". He adds: "We've just got so many smaller everyday things [occupying us]. My dad has every intention to finish it, but he still works 16 hours a day every single day."

Given the quarter-century hiatus, I ask whether they'd ever considered selling the property. An estate agent told me ahead of the meeting that it could fetch as much as £100million if sold.

But the Hoogstratens just look bemused at the idea that they might be persuaded to sell up.

"We've had all sorts of people trying to buy it," Hoogstraten reveals, "people with mega money."

So why did building work stop? "Remind me," says Hoogstraten to Max in a rare moment of uncertainty. The distractions that led him to cease work might be complex and stretch back 40 years, but one thing is clear, he insists: the builders were told to down their tools after a series of mistakes.

"There were major issues," Max explains, "not just in terms of aesthetics but also in terms of [what it would take to] rectify [them]." Hoogstraten remembers being infuriated by the positioning of a column that ruined one of the key features: an unobstructed view from one side of the building to the other.

On reflection, he blames the architect, even though he also says: "I designed every last bit of that building, [the architect] just did the paperwork."

In addition to the offending pillar, the mansion's owner recalls being irritated when he saw that the servants' staircases were tight and winding. This, he pointed out, was no good for staff carrying heavy trays.

The reason these mistakes became unmovable obstacles was because of the moment in Hoogstraten's life when they took place. He was charged with murder and then distracted by the situation in Zimbabwe, where he has vast land holdings.

"A number of things came together," Max explains, "And it was a project you needed to be on site every day for. My dad's attention was on investments in Zimbabwe."

He brands the trial, which saw him found guilty of manslaughter at the Old Bailey only to be overturned on appeal, "bulls***" and claims anyone who sat through the case would feel the same.

BUT IT undoubtedly left a mark. Max says he felt his father's life was different after the murder trial. A suggestion Hoogstraten, I should add, immediately rejects.

So much time has passed that it's hard to know conclusively if it was the chaotic land seizures of white landowners in Zimbabwe or being accused of a terrible crime that took his focus from the Palace.

Yet leaving such an expensive project on pause for so long is curious for a man who examines everything's value – he has a Co-op loyalty card to ensure he gets the best deals at his local discount supermarket and was famous for reusing teabags.

It is difficult to assess Hoogstraten's exact fortune. But his vast property empire and art collection have been valued at sums that would comfortably make him a billionaire. He dismisses figures like Elon Musk, whose value lies in share options, or Donald Trump, "who has everything mortgaged up to the eyeballs," as not being properly rich.

"People who have mortgages are just bulls*******," he adds.

In his opinion, the homes of the ultra-wealthy these days are filled with expensive items that don't hold any lasting value and "you'd be hard pushed to find any Louis XIV furniture anymore".

As he talks wistfully of the days of "real money" when lords and ladies owned large swathes of Africa, I begin to grasp why Hamilton Palace is still so important to him.

This was his great homage to the vision wealth he no longer believes exists, although he tells me "the world is f*****" and we're "on the way to Armageddon," even with everything in ruins, there are few greater legacies than a palace you built for yourself.

When Max asks if there is any other example of a private individual building that's a project like the palace, he's quick to fire back.

"No," replies Hoogstraten, "because nobody has any real money anymore."

Labour ‘dragging its heels’ on animal welfare reforms

By **Steph Spyro** ENVIRONMENT EDITOR

AFTER Life actress Diane Morgan has called for the Government to put an end to the cruelty of factory farming.

Campaigners have also blasted Labour for failing to follow through on its manifesto pledge for better animal welfare.

The Cunk on Earth star said: “Millions of animals suffer behind closed doors on factory farms every year.

“They’re caged, mutilated, gassed, separated from their babies – it’s heartbreaking. And even though some laws exist to protect them, hardly anyone’s checking if they’re actually being followed.”

Only 0.33% of farm complaints result in a prosecution, a report by Animal Equality and the Animal Law Foundation found in 2022.

‘Millions of animals suffer’

Ms Morgan, who backs a mandatory licensing and labelling system for all UK farms, said: “British consumers deserve to know how animals end up on their plates.”

It comes as Labour failed to implement any of its promised animal welfare policies in its first year in office, campaigners said.

Among the pledges that have not been brought in are banning the sale of animals with cropped ears, prohibiting imports of hunting trophies and banning imports of foie gras.

Campaigner Mark Jones said: “During the election, the Labour party pledged it would introduce the biggest boost in animal welfare for a generation.

“However, to date we’ve seen precious little progress towards fulfilling that bold ambition. Its action plan for animal welfare is anticipated in the autumn, and we hope to see an ambitious and progressive plan that covers the myriad circumstances that result in animal suffering. We also need Government to prioritise the implementation of its animal welfare plans.”

Pictures: ADAM GERRARD

BATTLE: Diane Morgan wants new rules

The Government has also failed to halt the UK promotion of holiday venues where animals are forced to perform tricks and give rides. This is because the Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act, which passed in 2023, has not been enforced.

Campaigner Duncan McNair said: “This Government’s failure to show any serious sign of delivering on its animal welfare promises is stark. Its unwillingness in particular to implement the Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act of 2023 is more than disappointing, it is shocking.”

A Defra spokesperson said: “All farms must comply with our high standards, and we’ve wasted no time making the most ambitious animal welfare plans in a generation a reality.

“We are already improving standards in zoos, cracking down on puppy smuggling and we will build on this through our animal welfare strategy later this year.”

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FOOTBALL'S ECO TABLE-TOPPERS

Seagulls named defenders of the Earth

BRIGHTON ROCKS: Amex Stadium and its surroundings see club top green league. Far left, player Brajan Gruda

EXCLUSIVE

By **Chris Riches**

PREMIER League club Brighton and Hove Albion is as green as the pitch at its Amex Stadium, topping the table of teams doing their bit for the environment.

The cleanest clubs in England's top flight can be revealed after the 20 football giants were ranked for their CO2 emissions, sustainability, pollution and green spaces.

And it is no wonder Seagulls midfielder Brajan Gruda is smiling, as his team has been crowned green champions with an environmentally friendly home win, scoring 80.6 out of 100.

The Amex has the second-largest green space within 500 metres of any PL stadium, with 188.67 hectares for fans – second only to west London's Brentford. It has the second-best air quality in the league too, with an IQAir air quality index level of 33, which is 14.1 under the Premier League average of 47.1.

'Brighton is as green as its football pitch'

The Seagulls also boast seven of a possible 11 club sustainability measures – including reusing rain and groundwater at their training ground and academies, 100% diversion of landfill waste plus renewable energy use.

And they have the seventh-least CO2 emissions from transport, at 255,600 tonnes. The Premier League club average is 432,440 tonnes.

But at the foot of the table, Leeds United scored just 5.4 out of 100.

The newly promoted West Yorkshire club suffers from extremely high transport CO2 emissions, zero club sustainability measures, and little green space within a 500-metre radius of the stadium at just 8.04 hectares. The extensive study, from online betting service TipMan Tips, creates an eco-table ranking all 20 top tier clubs.

Founder Fraser Bricknell said: "With the Premier League outlining its strategy to achieve net-zero emissions by 2040, and clubs introducing more sustainability measures, we wanted to find out which clubs are at the forefront of sustainability.

"Brighton's excellent air quality, abundant green space and low transport emissions see the Seagulls set a benchmark for eco-friendly football."

The study analysed four factors to give a total Green Score out of 100:

● 30 points: Pollution Levels, sourced from IQAir air quality index, where each stadium is located ranging from 0-50 (good) to 301-plus (hazardous);

● 30 points: Green Space sourced from Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework, measured the amount of publicly accessible green infrastructure within a 500-metre radius of each stadium;

● 20 points: Club Sustainability Measures sourced from the Sport Positive Premier League Clubs Environmental Sustainability Report, which outlined how many out of 11 sustainability measures have been implemented;

● 20 points: Transport CO2 Emissions sourced from DESNZ Local Authority CO2eq Emissions 2023.

How England's top-flight teams fare in game of going green

RANK	CLUB	NUMBER OF ECO MEASURES OUT OF 11	POLLUTION LEVELS	TRANSPORT CO2 EMISSIONS	GREEN SPACE HECTARES	TOTAL /100
1	Brighton	7	33	255,600	188.67	80.6
2	Brentford	5	39	331,900	214.38	72
3	Tottenham	10	40	136,600	27.97	59.3
4	Chelsea	5	39	122,300	22.78	52
5	Fulham	5	39	122,300	15.28	51.1
6	Bournemouth	1	30	424,200	47.13	48.6
7	Crystal Palace	6	38	315,200	20.99	48.6
8	Burnley	4	58	126,500	154.84	46
9	West Ham	3	40	219,500	26.94	43.6
10	Newcastle Utd	6	46	380,300	40.13	42
11	Liverpool	11	57	508,900	78.86	39.8
12	Arsenal	7	53	192,800	9.6	38.2
13	Wolves	8	57	265,300	19.77	34.1
14	Man City	10	53	621,400	13.24	32.8
15	Sunderland	0	45	355,400	2.15	28.3
16	Notts Forest	3	55	400,400	28.79	24.7
17	Man Utd	5	53	621,400	2.14	21.3
18	Everton	5	57	508,900	1.28	17
19	Aston Villa	3	54	1,312,400	25.22	15.8
20	Leeds Utd	0	56	1,427,500	8.04	5.4

Blessed: I don't regret turning down Doctor Who

By **Peter Dyke**

VETERAN actor Brian Blessed says he has no regrets about turning down the coveted role of Doctor Who.

The BBC wanted him to take over as the Time Lord in 1966 when William Hartnell left the then-three-year-old sci-fi drama through ill health.

But 88-year-old Brian claims the Beeb started touting his name around as the second Doctor before he had even been approached.

And so he decided to cause havoc behind the scenes with TV bosses when they eventually asked him to join the show.

He revealed: "Did you know The Radio Times put me on the front cover as Doctor Who? The BBC were going to make me Doctor Who without even talking to me.

"But they were terrified when I said 'If I ever play Doctor Who I'd want to play him as oriental'.

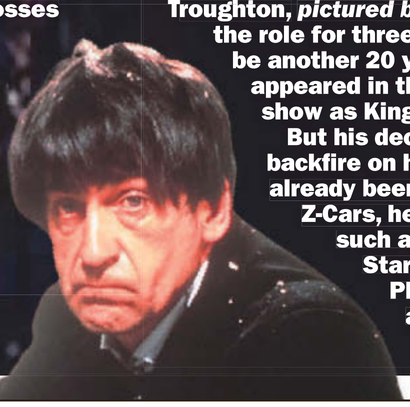
"This was in the 1960s and they nearly had a f**** heart attack.**

"Who?? His name is not Doctor Smith. It's Doctor Whooooooooooo... he's f**** oriental. I don't regret turning it down."**

The second incarnation of the Time Lord went to a then 46-year-old Patrick Troughton, *pictured below*, who played the role for three years. It would be another 20 years before Brian appeared in the long-running show as King Yrcanos.

But his decision did not backfire on him. Having already been in BBC series Z-Cars, he starred in films such as Flash Gordon, Star Wars: The Phantom Menace, and Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves.

GUEST STAR: Brian as King Yrcanos in 1986



NOT RIGHT TIME LORD: Brian

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Social housing battling Big Ben

Over-65s housing and tower up for award

By **Jaymi McCann**

AN ABANDONED care home converted into social housing for older people is going up against the refurbishment of Big Ben for a prestigious architecture award.

The £25million Appleby Blue Almshouse, in Southwark, south London, has been run by United St Saviour's Charity since 2023.

It is now one of six projects up for the Royal Institute of British Architects' Stirling Prize – alongside work on the 160-year-old Elizabeth Tower at Parliament, *left*, known as Big Ben.

The strikingly modern version of an almshouse has 57 flats for the over-65s, many of whom have mental health or financial difficulties, and was designed by Witherford Watson Mann Architects.

Stephen Witherford, from the firm, said: "We wanted to tackle the issue of loneliness in cities, so we looked at traditional almshouses and flipped it over.

"Normally they're built in a U-shape with the garden and courtyard in the back. With this, we put it right on the high street and opened it up to the community. This project is all about the residents, they're in the fabric of the building."

He added: "I can tell you that people are happy there, their mental health has largely improved and they're proud of their homes.

"They're living somewhere of quality, where people actually support each other.

"This nomination is really for the residents, a win would mean so much to them. We've shown you don't need to hide older people away, they've got so much more to give.

"This building celebrates people and I hope it can be a model for other projects in cities around the country."

Also shortlisted for the honour, awarded on October 16, are the Japanese-style Niwa House in south London, AstraZeneca's Discovery Centre in Cambridge, London College of Fashion in Stratford, east London, and Hastings House in East Sussex.

COMMUNITY: Appleby Blue Almshouse

POP VIDEO: Ed Sheeran

Brit stars lead charge for awards

ED SHEERAN and Charli XCX will lead Britain's bid for glory at tonight's annual MTV Video Music Awards in New York.

Cambridge born singer-songwriter Charli, 33, is a nominee in five categories – including Best Pop Artist – for her number one single Guess, featuring Billie Eilish.

Her VMA nominations follow her triple Grammy-winning success earlier this year for her album Brat.

Ed, 34, is favourite to land Best Pop Video for Sapphire, an Indian-themed single he released from his new album Play.

Rising indie pop star Lola Young, 24, will be vying for Best New Artist as well as Best Alternative Video for her breakout number one hit Messy.

RIGHT NOTE: Swift

Taylor has got hold on our hearts

TAYLOR Swift is the perfect "on hold" music when you are waiting on the phone, a study shows.

University of York researchers put 2,540 participants on hold for two minutes and 22 seconds while one of 10 audio tracks was piped into their ears, while monitoring their heart rate, mood and alertness.

And they found the songs of the 35-year-old Shake It Off singer were the perfect blend to calm people down.

Stuart Wilson, from Talkmobile, which commissioned the study, said: "Although it may disappoint some 'Swifties', we won't be able to able to get permission to use her songs as hold music."

CAN'T BEAT IT: Katrina & The Waves, top; The Beach Boys and ABBA can help travellers

Queasy listening

How feel-good music puts brakes on car sickness

By **Hanna Geissler** HEALTH EDITOR

SUFFERERS of motion sickness will know all too well how feelings of nausea can linger even after movement has stopped.

So they will welcome research revealing a way to speed up their recovery – listening to happy music.

A study found one minute listening to joyful tunes appeared to ease motion sickness more than soft or passionate music.

Sad tunes, meanwhile, were found to be worse for car sickness than silence.

'Listen to cheerful and gentle music for relief'

Study leader Dr Qizong Yue, of Southwest University in China, said: "Motion sickness significantly impairs the travel experience for many individuals and existing pharmacological interventions often carry side effects such as drowsiness.

"Music represents a non-invasive, low-cost and personalised intervention strategy."

The study involved 30 people known to experience moderate car sickness. They were divided into six groups and sat in a driving simulator.

Once the ride stopped, they reported their levels of nausea before and after listening to music or no music. Chinese classical and orchestral music was used for the study. Sickness levels were reduced by 57.3% for participants who listened to joyful music, 56.7% for soft music and 48.3% for passionate music.

But people who listened to sad music saw their sickness level drop by only 40% – which was less than those who did not listen to any music, at 43.3%.

Participants also wore electroencephalogram caps to monitor their brain activity. The EEG measured less complex activity in the occipital lobe – responsible for visual processing – when participants said they felt quite sick. Activity returned to normal as patients recovered.

The researchers theorised that soft music relaxes people, relieving the tension that exacerbates car sickness, while joyful music might distract people by activating brain reward systems. Meanwhile, sad music may amplify negative emotions and increase discomfort.

Publishing their results in the journal Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, the team noted that the study was small and further research was needed.

However, Dr Yue added: "Based on our conclusions, individuals experiencing motion sickness symptoms during travel can listen to cheerful or gentle music to achieve relief.

"The primary theoretical frameworks for motion sickness genesis apply broadly to sickness induced by various vehicles.

"Therefore, the findings of this study likely extend to motion sickness experienced during air or sea travel."

Hit songs to calm or compromise your commute

FEEL-GOOD TRACKS:
Walking on Sunshine – *Katrina & The Waves*
Don't Stop Me Now – *Queen*
Good Vibrations – *The Beach Boys*
Happy – *Pharrell Williams*
Dancing Queen – *ABBA*

FEEL-WORSE TRACKS:
Everybody Hurts – *REM*
Tears in Heaven – *Eric Clapton*
My Heart Will Go On – *Celine Dion (pictured left)*
Nothing Compares 2 U – *Sinead O'Connor*
Boys Don't Cry – *The Cure*

THE SOUND OF SIRENS

Today's emergency alert, which will ring out on all UK mobile phones at 3pm, is the latest in a long line of public warning systems. HOLLY SEDDON – whose chilling new thriller envisages a looming nuclear strike – writes about the unnerving reality it might one day herald

AT 3PM TODAY, all compatible mobile phones in the UK should simultaneously emit a high-pitched whine while vibrating and displaying a test message from the Government's emergency alert system. The test is just in case, but in case of what?

Well, a bit of everything ranging from floods to terrorism to the ultimate worst-case scenario: nuclear attack. When this system was first tested nationally, in April 2023, it was met with mixed reactions. Many people did not receive the alert at all. Others took to social media to mock and meme-ify it. Some, like me, were deeply unnerved.

My fear was not because I thought it was real, but because I was writing a thriller about the effects of a nuclear attack warning and it felt like reality was overtaking fiction. The alert ringing out from my family's phones that day was a sharp little reminder that this really could happen one day.

To a child of the 1980s, nuclear fears are nothing new. I was too young to watch the 1984 TV drama Threads when it first came out, but Raymond Briggs's 1982 graphic novel, When The Wind Blows, and the 1986 animated film adaptation, did enough to both terrify me and leave me feeling that "preparing" for nuclear war was a misnomer.

When I finally watched Threads many years later, it had not lost its potency. It is available on BBC iPlayer for one more month. For anyone who thinks they would want to survive nuclear war, I recommend watching it to disabuse yourself of the notion.

Throughout the Cold War, the UK was braced for worst-case scenarios. And if nuclear missiles had been sent our way between 1962 and 1992, it was the HANDEL system that was responsible for letting everyone in Britain know.

As with the use of the mobile phone network today, the HANDEL system was reliant on another phone system – the speaking clock. There were two HANDEL operating sites, known as injection sites, at RAF High Wycombe and the Royal Observer Corps bunker in Goosnargh, Lancashire. Alongside TV and radio broadcasts from an emergency studio at BBC Broadcasting House, these sites would have been responsible for alerting the nation in the case of nuclear attack.

Each of the HANDEL injection sites had simple key-operated consoles. If an enemy attack had been detected, the key at one or both of the injection sites would be turned. Two lights would come on, and then the operator would press and hold down a red button and announce: "Attack Warning Red".

The "Attack Warning Red" alert would be sent – via the speaking clock telephone system – to 250 "carrier control points" (CCPs) based at major police stations across the country. The CCPs would then forward warning messages to 7,000 powered sirens – many of them the same air raid sirens that had alerted the public during the Second World War.

In rural areas, around 11,000 hand-powered sirens would be operated by volunteers including rural police officers, postmasters and even pub landlords. This same system would be used to warn the public about fallout levels after the attack.

So why can't we use this robust siren system now, especially as people with older phones or those not connected to 4G or 5G networks may not receive the text alerts?

Because it no longer exists.

Just three years after the Berlin Wall fell, the Cold War was deemed "over" and the whole system was decommissioned. One of the HANDEL consoles is now on display at the Imperial War Museum.

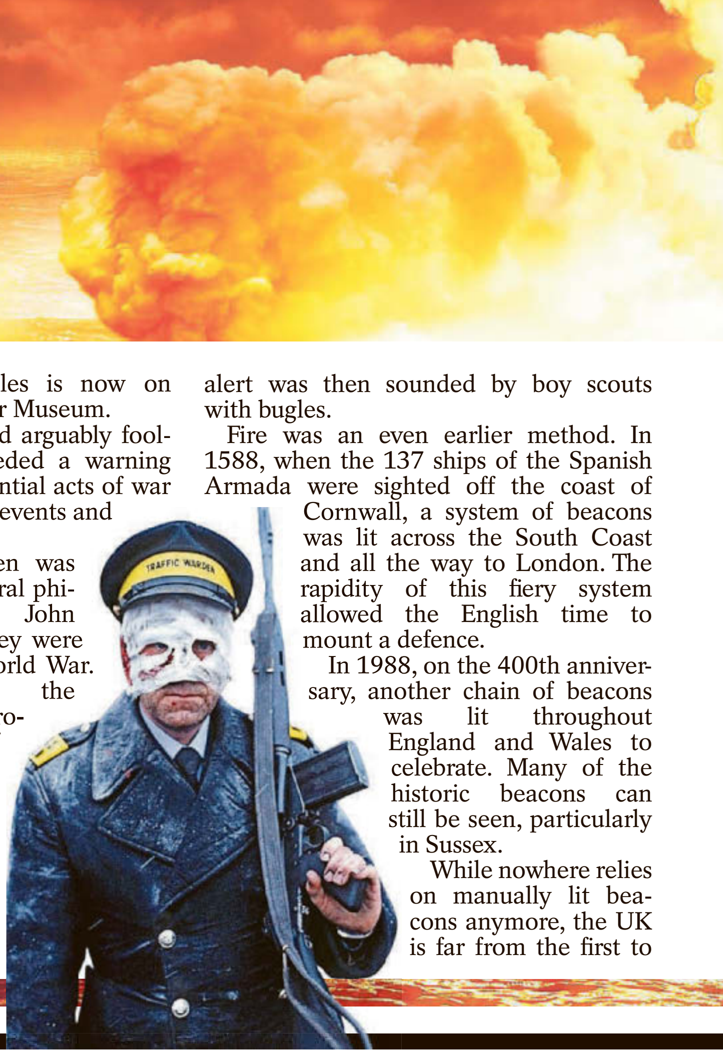
It was a bold move, and arguably foolish. We have always needed a warning system – not just for potential acts of war but also extreme weather events and other disasters.

Although the first siren was invented by Scottish natural philosopher and physicist John Robison around 1799, they were not used in the First World War. Instead, in 1917, the Metropolitan Police introduced a system of maroons (a type of very loud firework) to warn Londoners about approaching German bombers. The "all clear" alert was then sounded by boy scouts with bugles.

Fire was an even earlier method. In 1588, when the 137 ships of the Spanish Armada were sighted off the coast of Cornwall, a system of beacons was lit across the South Coast and all the way to London. The rapidity of this fiery system allowed the English time to mount a defence.

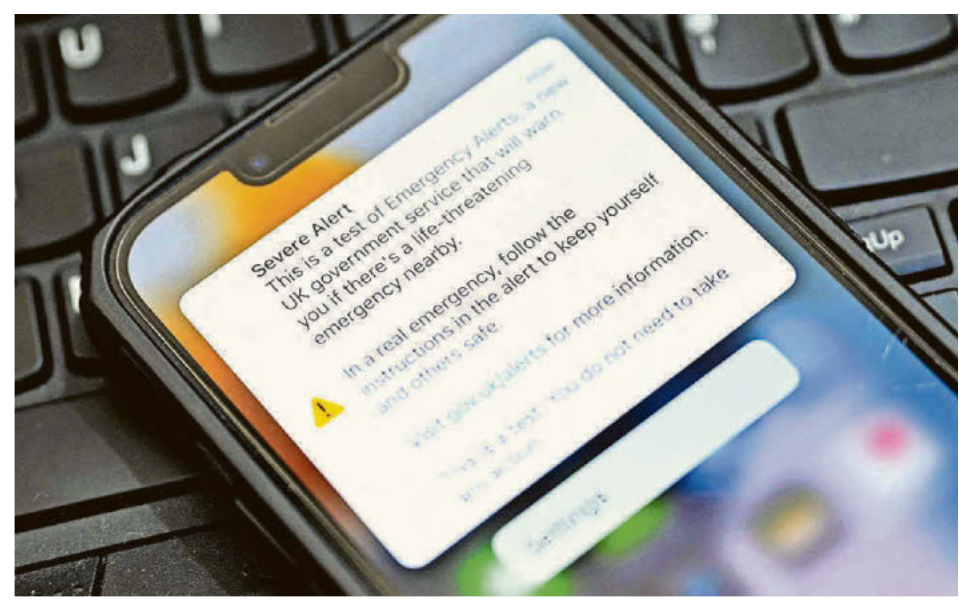
In 1988, on the 400th anniversary, another chain of beacons was lit throughout England and Wales to celebrate. Many of the historic beacons can still be seen, particularly in Sussex.

While nowhere relies on manually lit beacons anymore, the UK is far from the first to



EARLY WARNING: BBC drama Threads

RED ALERT: Chile developed its own warning system after an earthquake and tsunami in 2010 killed hundreds; below, UK mobile test message in April 2023



Severe Alert
This is a test of Emergency Alerts, a new UK government service that will warn you if there's a life-threatening emergency nearby.

In a real emergency, follow the instructions in the alert to keep yourself and others safe.

Visit gov.uk/alerts for more information.

adopt emergency mobile phone alerts. When it was hit with a disastrous 2010 earthquake and tsunami, Chile's national authorities failed to provide safety information to the public fast enough. The Sistema de Alerta de Emergencia (Emergency Alert System) was created in 2012 as a result and rolled out in 2017. It's now law that all mobile phones in Chile must be compatible with the SAE.

THE EU-ALERT system is available to all national authorities in the European Union and is based on the same system as NL-Alert, which launched in the Netherlands in 2012.

As with the UK system, the same notification format and sound is used regardless of the threat level, from missing children to catastrophic attack. In some national versions, people can opt out of the lowest level alerts but serious alerts will be sent to everyone.

While text alerts are increasingly popular around the world as the fastest technique for mass population warning systems, there are still an interesting variety of methods.

In Japan, the J-Alert system has been operational since 2007. This is partly akin to an updated version of previous British systems, including the use of loud sirens.

The satellite-based system is able to broadcast alerts to both media and the public via a nationwide network of loud speakers, as well as via email and cell broadcasts. Japanese officials say it takes just one second to inform local officials, and between four and 20 seconds to get the message to people.

These alerts cover everything from severe weather and earthquakes to attacks. In the case of ballistic missiles heading their way, a Civil Protection Siren sounds across loudspeakers.

None of these systems, however, is foolproof. In 2018, an incoming ballistic missile alert was mistakenly sent out in Hawaii. The public was warned to shelter, and given this was at the height of tensions between North Korea and the US, a large number believed the alert. It took 38 minutes to send a second alert confirming it was a false alarm.

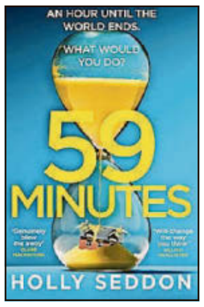
The panic that spread through the islands included motorists parking inside tunnels, multiple evacuations, people sheltering in official bunkers and unofficial spaces.

Phone lines and data services were jammed, and one man suffered a heart attack after saying goodbye to his children. He survived, but sued the state.

Of course, tests like today's are intended to prevent such disastrous mistakes. People have asked me if researching 59 Minutes – published on September 25 and opening with an alert of imminent nuclear attack – has turned me into a "prepper": stockpiling water and rations, or building some kind of bunker in the cellar.

In fact, the opposite is true. If the worst were to happen, I would not want to survive and live through the horrors of what would follow. So, this time, I choose not to be scared by this test.

Instead, at 3pm, I will give my family a very big hug and be grateful that we have another normal day together.



● *59 Minutes by Holly Seddon (Orion, £10.99) is published on September 25*

OPINION: PAGE 14

‘Children should be children not soldiers’

HOME SAFE: Kidnapped children rescued by Save Ukraine are reunited with families after ordeal at hands of Russian troops

By **Marco Giannangeli**
DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

HAD HE not been rescued, Serhii might be learning to fire grenades or drive tanks for the Russian army.

The 14-year-old Ukrainian was 11 when invading forces deported him from Vovchansk, Kharkiv, to a “children’s camp” in Medvezhonok across the border.

Like thousands of others, he was bullied and brainwashed by Russian authorities desperate for troops to feed into their so-called meat grinder.

Instead of fighting against his homeland, he was saved by the determination of his older sister Kseniia Koldin – who had herself escaped capture – and is now back in Ukraine.

When she finally reached him after months apart, she expected her little brother to run into her arms.

“My brother didn’t even hug me, it was very strange,” she said.

“He started repeating all of the propaganda he had been fed. He was scared there are Nazis, they were going to kill him, he would be very miserable and they would hate him.”

For three hours she reminded him of their childhood. Slowly the fear faded. At last he asked, “Are you sure it’s safe?”. Kseniia took his hands. “Yes, Serhii. We’ll be safe together,” she told him.

FAMILY TRAUMA: Kseniia now has her brother Serhii back

Serhii now lives with a foster family, while Kseniia, 20, studies journalism in Kyiv. “I promised I would never leave my brother, no matter what,” she said. “Children should be children, not soldiers.”

EXPRESS CRUSADE
RETURN THE STOLEN CHILDREN

Her words come as a new report by War Child UK, Save Ukraine and the Human Security Centre documents the systematic abduction, indoctrination and militarisation of Ukrainian children.

Based on 200 testimonies, it concludes that Russia’s aim is to erase Ukrainian identity and transform children into a mobilisation resource for its armed forces – the largest organised campaign of child rights violations in Europe since the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s.

It found 55% of children were subjected to pro-Russian indoctrination and bans on the Ukrainian language, 41% reported militarisation including weapons training, and 30% attended camps where they fired live rounds and grenades.

More chillingly, 10% said they had been tortured, while 6% reported sexual assaults.

Tomorrow, War Child and Save Ukraine will launch Return Every Child at London’s Outernet centre, with 19,546 paper dolls symbolising every abducted child.

Actress Carey Mulligan, War Child’s global ambassador, said: “These children have been ripped away from their families and given military training. No child should be exposed to this kind of treatment.”

COMMENT

By Helen Pattinson
CEO War Child UK

“THEY said if my parents didn’t take me back within six months, I’d be sent to an orphanage. They kept saying no one would come for us, that we shouldn’t expect anyone.”

These are the words of a 16-year-old girl from Kherson, Ukraine. When we speak about war, we often reach for numbers. Tens of thousands killed, millions displaced. But the danger of stats is that we lose the human story. They make us forget that behind every number is a child deeply loved by their family.

Our report tells the story of 200 of Ukraine’s stolen children, in their own words. They were brainwashed, tortured, sexually abused and forced into adoption – among other horrific abuses.

It has been the largest, most organised campaign of grave child rights violations in Europe since the Yugoslav wars.

Not collateral damage – it has been deliberate, devastating, and a war crime. The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants but while accountability is vital, it is not enough. Children are still missing.

The challenges are immense. So far, 19,546 Ukrainian children have been identified by the Ukrainian government as having been taken by Russia. Out of all those taken to live under Putin, only 1,366 are now back home.

One of the young people taken told us how, when he finally crossed back to Ukraine, he was suffering from nightmares and couldn’t eat. Since recovered thanks to Save Ukraine, he now helps others return. But children should never have to be so brave. The UK Government must lead the international community in prioritising and protecting these children’s rights.

We owe it to them to fight for their return. Every single one.

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PUPPY LOVE: For parents

A dog's life when kids leave home

By **Jaymi McCann**

WHEN their children have flown the nest, more than half of parents get a puppy to fill the void.

Research shows 58% of those quizzed said they missed feeling needed – while more than two-thirds like having someone to care for.

And 40% also confessed to feeling lonely when their offspring become more independent, according to the survey conducted by online pet marketplace Rover.com

Of those whose kids have left home, one in 10 waited six months after they moved out before getting a puppy. But a fifth waited less than a month.

TOP FIVE DOG BREEDS FOR EMPTY NESTERS:

Labrador (9%)
Golden Retriever (8%)
Cocker Spaniel (8%)
Cockapoo (6%)
French Bulldog (6%)

More than half said they don't know how they would have coped without their pup, citing the daily affection (61%), purposeful routines (48%) and unconditional love (48%) that helped them most through this life transition.

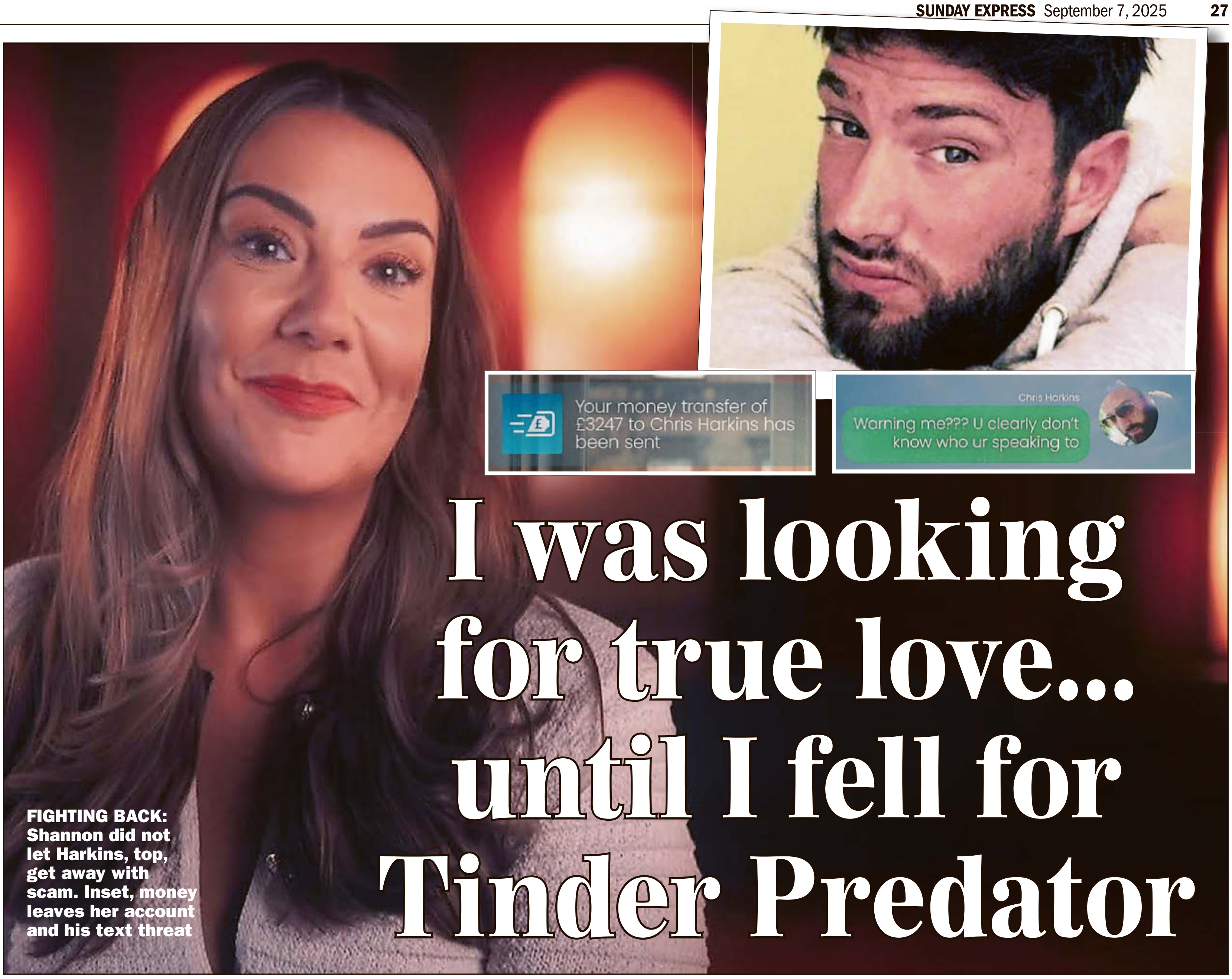
As a result, 87% say they now see their pooch as another one of their children.

Adem Fehmi, Rover's canine behaviour expert, said: "Welcoming a dog after adult children leave home can be deeply rewarding, providing companionship, purpose and opportunities to meet new people.

"Dogs help establish daily routines but it's vital to be fully prepared for the responsibilities and complex needs of dog ownership.

"Bringing a puppy into the home can feel like returning to the 'baby' stage. However, while this may be appealing, it's important to ensure it is a deliberate lifestyle choice, not just an emotional reaction."

I was looking for true love... until I fell for Tinder Predator



FIGHTING BACK: Shannon did not let Harkins, top, get away with scam. Inset, money leaves her account and his text threat

Your money transfer of £3247 to Chris Harkins has been sent

Chris Harkins

Warning me??? U clearly don't know who ur speaking to

By **James Rampton**

"I ABSOLUTELY love love," declares Shannon. "I'm a hopeless romantic."

Six years ago, the 40-year-old had no idea it would lead her into an appallingly traumatic experience. After ending a relationship in 2019, she was searching for a new partner and joined the dating app Tinder.

Speaking to the Sunday Express from her home in Glasgow, Shannon remembers: "I was ready for someone to sweep me off my feet."

She matched with Christopher Harkins, a charismatic and seemingly wealthy, jet-setting foreign exchange trader from Helensburgh, around 20 miles north-west of Glasgow.

Shannon, an independent, successful managing director of a recruitment firm, started dating him, dreaming of a happy ever after. "It felt a little bit Disney. I was hoping this would be a love story," she says. Sadly, it proved to be far from a fairytale – with alarming speed, it turned into a nightmare.

'I was hoping this would be a Disney love story'

Soon after meeting, Harkins suggested they go on an extravagant holiday to Mykonos.

He persuaded Shannon to loan him £3,247 so he could book their trip of a lifetime to the Greek island, promising to pay her back the next day.

She woke the following morning feeling uneasy about having transferred such a large amount and when she tried to phone him, the line was dead. "I felt so sick," she recalls.

She called the hotel that Harkins claimed to have booked but there was no record of a reservation. After discovering this, she realised she had been defrauded by a man who became known as "The Tinder Predator".

She went to the police but two male officers told her it was a civil matter and there was nothing they could do.

Harkins's despicable behaviour had gone on unchecked for more than a decade, despite nine women reporting him to the police between 2012 and 2019. Such police inaction meant the conman was able to keep getting away with scamming women, thinking he was untouchable, which emboldened him to target more victims.

STORY TO TELL: Journalist Catriona Stewart

At the point when Shannon realised she would not get her money back, she resolved to go to the media: "My only option was to take this public," she says.

Her message to Harkins was: "I'm going to have every woman in Glasgow know who you are. I wanted other women not to fall for this".

Shannon's story being published encouraged other victims to come forward.

Catriona Stewart, the journalist who wrote it, was immediately inundated with women recounting similar tales of being exploited by Harkins.

Backed into a corner, the arch-manipulator then sent his victims vile, intimidating messages and threatened to shame them by posting private videos on the internet.

And he said he would burn down Shannon's house with her and her dog inside it.

But his victims would not be cowed, and soon more than 20 women in both Scotland and England came forward.

It became clear that for more than a decade, Harkins, now 38, had charmed numerous women to fall for him, before taking their money and inflicting physical and sexual abuse. One of his victims went bankrupt and another had mental health issues after being compelled to repay her debts over several years.

Shannon's story is one of five featured in Catching the Tinder Predator, a new Prime Video documentary, which can be streamed from today.

Harkins was finally brought to justice and in 2023 was jailed for 15 months in London after being convicted on five counts of fraud.

He was found guilty of another 19 offences, including rape, assault, threatening and abusive behaviour and four other sexual offences in Paisley, on the outskirts of Glasgow, last year.

The court heard he raped one victim while she was asleep and he previously admitted defrauding nine women out of more than £214,000.

He was sentenced to 12 years in prison, put on the sex offenders' register indefinitely and banned from contacting his victims.

Shannon says this devastating experience has left her wary of men: "I'm still single. It's difficult because I don't ever want to fall victim to these things again. I'm hyper-vigilant. It's almost like I'm constantly searching for all these red flags."

'He said he would burn down my house'

But she adds: "I'm very happy. Romance is not something that I'm pining for. It will happen when it happens. I'm a very independent, single, happy woman.

"Six years ago I was in a place of shame and embarrassment but now I feel super-proud, not just of myself but of all the women who came forward. Harkins is now in prison, where he belongs and where he will be for a long time."

She is hopeful her bravery in going public will encourage other abused women to call out their tormentors. "The biggest thing is, don't be afraid to speak up. If one person doesn't listen, go to the next. That's ultimately what exposed Harkins."

● *Catching the Tinder Predator, Prime Video, from today.*

Rob's MND message hitting home

By **Jaymi McCann**

THERE is more awareness of motor neurone disease in the UK than in the US and Australia, a survey shows.

The research, by Longitude Prize, shows that when asked to identify the symptoms, 52% of UK respondents with no relationship to someone with a neurodegenerative disease answered accurately. This is compared with 47% of Australians and just 33% of Americans.

Last year, the disease claimed the life of rugby legend Rob Burrow, 41.

His friend and fellow star Kevin Sinfield, 44, has so far raised millions for research. And their quest to increase awareness is paying off in the UK, with more than two thirds of Britons knowing that MND is not curable. That compares to 64% in Australia and 52% in the US.

The Sunday Express Fund The Fight To Cure MND, which helped secure £50million of government funding for research to find effective treatments for the condition, was also credited with having raised public understanding.

EXPRESS CRUSADE
Fund the fight to cure MND

RAISING MILLIONS: Kevin with Rob

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WORTHY GRAND FINALE

Terminally ill Cindy Mackenzie feared she might never see the last instalment of her beloved Downton Abbey... until kind-hearted cast members learned of daughter Michelle's urgent wish to honour her mother's bucket list

EXCLUSIVE

By **Lesley O'Toole**

DOWNTON Abbey fans have just a few more days to wait to see The Grand Finale, the eagerly anticipated third and final film in Julian Fellowes's much-loved franchise. But, as the Sunday Express can reveal today, one superfan received her own unofficial premiere in June – just days before she died of ovarian cancer.

Grandmother of two and beauty training academies owner Cindy Mackenzie, 67, spent the last few months of her life at St Andrew's Hospice in Airdrie after her stage 4 diagnosis in August 2024.

After creating a bucket list, she enjoyed a birthday party attended by 100 people, a trip to Gleneagles, and a wedding blessing for her son, Bruce, and his fiancee, Kirsty.

But the Downton devotee became too ill to fulfil one of her dearest wishes – a visit to Highclere Castle, the Hampshire stately home that doubles for Downton Abbey.

And that wasn't the only source of her sadness. "She had just watched all six TV seasons for the seventh time," explains her daughter and author Michelle, 45. "She was distraught she wouldn't see the new film because she didn't think she would live long enough."

Knowing the film's release wasn't until September 12, Michelle felt she had to act.

"In May I decided to post on X and asked if any cast member saw my message, would they mind sending a kind word her way?" she says. "To be honest, that was the very most we were hoping for."

To her shock but utter delight, two cast members (who have asked not to be identified) sent personalised videos and an audio message to Cindy, who was born in the US but moved to Scotland with her Scottish mother when she was 15.

"The audio message was about filming at Highclere Castle and Mum really felt like she was there," smiles Michelle. "We all were emotional and thankful for this glimpse into Downton."

The cast and crew were already raising money for charity through a huge Bonhams auction of 226 items from the series – including clothes, props and even a car – which runs now until September 16.

But this was an incredible personal act of benevolence.

Michelle hid the personalised video messages from her mum before telling her she was going to have a Downton Abbey-themed night. Everyone got dressed up and watched a YouTube walk-through of the castle. At the end, Michelle revealed there was a "special surprise" in store for Cindy before playing her the videos.

"She was lost for words," says Michelle. "Later, I would catch her watching the videos and listening to the voice note, each time with tears in her eyes. Mum just couldn't believe what these stars from the show had done for her. We all cried together. It just so happened that she was a huge fan of both of these characters, as am I."

'Mum just could not believe what these stars had done for her'

Michelle believes it "speaks volumes" that the actors who offered their time so generously have chosen not to go public with their charitable gesture.

"We are people of faith and knew that everything that happened was more than coincidence – God was watching over Mum," she says.

The story might have ended there were it not for the cast gathering in London to create promotional material for the new film. A suggestion was made that Downton Abbey's distributor, Universal Pictures International, might fly someone up to Scotland to show Cindy the new film. When Michelle,

FINALE FIRST: Cindy watches the final instalment of Downton Abbey – three months before it appears in cinemas. Right, Elizabeth McGovern and Hugh Bonneville in the latest film

Picture (left): BRUCE MACKENZIE

her father and Cindy's husband Colin, a minister, and her brother, photographer Bruce, learned of the kind-hearted proposal, they couldn't believe it.

"We were blown away, I was shaking, and we decided to tell Mum," says Michelle. "The doctors had said that it wouldn't be long so we thought it would give her something to live for."

With some help from the hospice, Michelle and Bruce organised a screening of Cindy's favourite festive films in May as she adored Christmas.

BUT NO ONE dared dream that watching the final Downton Abbey film would ever really happen.

That all changed when company representative Nick Quilter flew up from London and made Cindy's wishes come true on June 4.

"My wee mum was putting on her make-up once he texted that he was on the way," laughs Michelle.

"We expected to sign a NDA [non-disclosure agreement] but he only asked that we not post anything on social media – and we have not. But we were allowed to take some photos. Bruce got fedora hats for us to wear." She adds: "We all shared in a moment that has touched our lives forever.

"It took us about five hours to watch the film because Mum needed breaks and that had been built into the schedule.

"She was thrilled. In her awake moments, her eyes were never off the screen. She held on for this."

Michelle says that day was the very last day her terminally ill mother left her bed.

The previous week, doctors had only given her a week or two to live.

"As it happened, she lived until June 19 when she died peacefully listening to her beloved Carpenters," she says. "We were all at her bedside and fully believe this miraculous event gave us all much more time together."

She says the family will be forever grateful to everyone involved.

"We still can't quite believe it and neither could Mum," she says.

"The three of us will be going to the cinema to watch Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale again, in honour of Mum.

"We know she will be right there with us."

● *Downton Abbey: The Auction runs until Noon on September 16. For full list of costume and props, visit bonhams.com/auction/31605/downton-abbey-the-auction*

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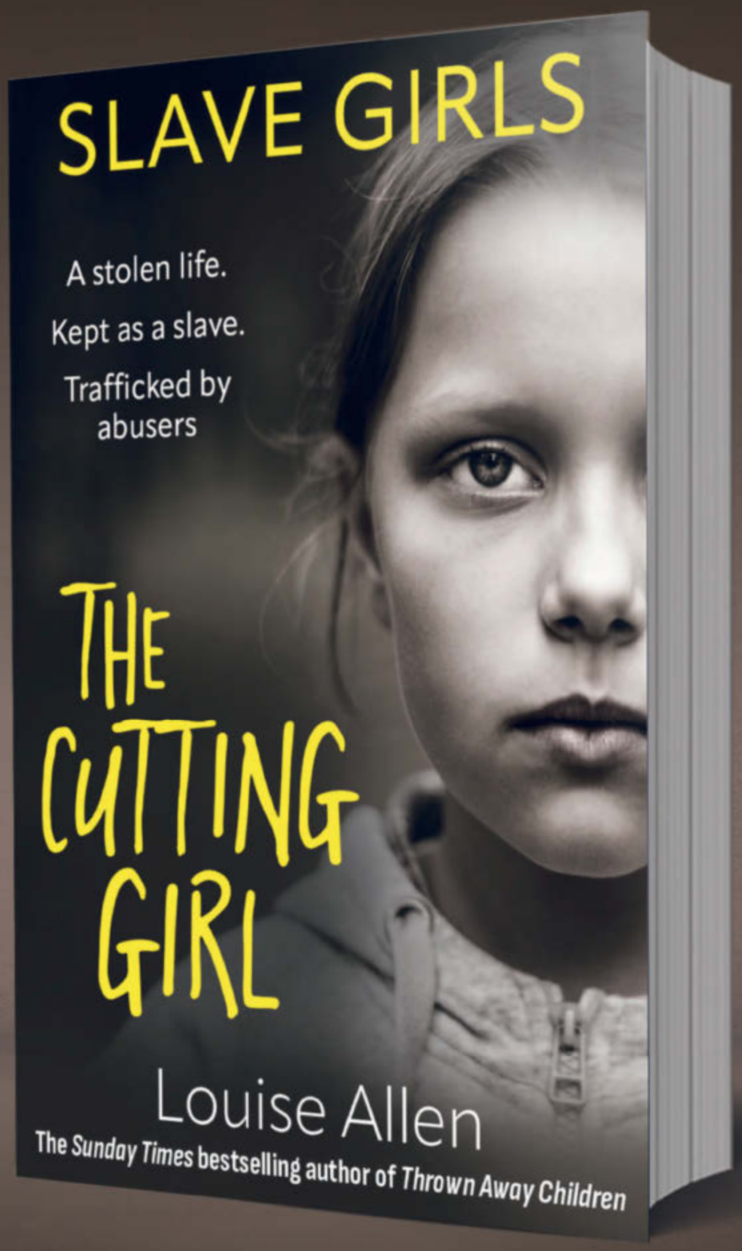
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Bone health at breaking point in ministers' own back yards

'Lack of local fracture clinics puts residents' lives at risk'

Royal Osteoporosis Society
Dear Wes, Please...
#PublishTheBonePlan

SIGN OF THE TIMES: Actress Miriam Margolyes with her 'hurry up' message to Wes Streeting

By **Jaymi McCann**

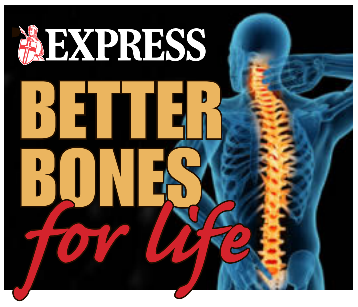
PEOPLE living in the constituencies of England's most senior health ministers are at risk of life-limiting or fatal fractures.

Residents of Ilford North, East London, whose MP is Health Secretary Wes Streeting, do not have access to specialist bone clinics – Fracture Liaison Services – for early diagnosis and treatment of osteoporosis.

The Royal Osteoporosis Society has calculated that in the area covered by the North East London Integrated Care Board, which covers Mr Streeting's constituency, universal FLS would, over five years, prevent 1,400 fragility fractures, save 140 lives, free up more than 11,000 acute hospital bed days, and save more than £16million for local health and social care services.

Those in West Lancashire, with health minister Ashley Dalton as their MP, also have no FLS, despite her responsibility for conditions such as osteoporosis.

In the Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB, where Ms Dalton's seat is, a full FLS roll-out would prevent 2,000 fractures, save over 200 lives, free up 14,000 bed days, and save £22million over five years, the ROS says.



These are among swathes of England not covered by these specialist bone clinics. Half of NHS trusts in England are still without a FLS, creating a deadly postcode lottery for sufferers.

Craig Jones, ROS CEO, said: "Few parts of the country are immune from this deadly postcode lottery but the 340 lives at stake in Wes Streeting's and Ashley Dalton's own constituencies show why we need the roll-out of these life-saving clinics to finally start. That's why we're asking the ministers to publish the bone plan, so we can get on with changing and saving lives, including in their local areas."

Mr Streeting is a long-standing supporter of the Sunday Express's Better Bones campaign, which called for universal access to FLS across Britain.

He made a pre-election pledge to roll out clinics to all of England by 2030, which he has repeated since taking office.

But no timetable for this has been published, leading campaigners to urge the Government to "publish the plan".

ROS ambassador and Harry Potter star Miriam Margolyes said: "Two-and-a-half years after the start of this campaign, people are getting worried about whether things will ever change.

"Come on, Wes. You did say rolling out these clinics would be one of your first acts in post, so please publish the bone plan. Be the man who gives osteoporosis patients their lives back."

The Department of Health said: "We remain committed to rolling out fracture liaison services across every part of the country by 2030, as set out in our 10-Year Health Plan, published last month."

UNDER PRESSURE: Minister Ashley Dalton and Health Secretary Wes Streeting

'Teachers bear brunt of social media toxicity'

By **Jon Coates**

SOCIAL media is fuelling a surge in youth violence, including knife crime, the teachers' union NASUWT has warned.

Teachers are facing the consequences in classrooms, it said, as it called for stronger regulation – including rapid removal of violent content and real penalties for failure to act.

It will make its case at the TUC Congress in Brighton today. Matt Wrack, general secretary, said: "Teachers are being threatened, assaulted and traumatised – and social media pours fuel on the fire." He said social media giants "must be held accountable for the violent content they host" adding that "years of austerity have gutted youth services and left schools without the resources to cope".

SECTOR NEEDS SHAKE-UP

Pictures: ADAM GERRARD

DEVOTED: Richard and Louise Woollam

‘Criminal vetting is essential’

By **Jon King**

A WIFE left devastated after her husband’s carer stole her jewellery is campaigning for tougher checks on criminal history after learning the woman had 13 previous convictions.

Louise Woollam wants vulnerable elderly people to be protected from those looking after them, in the same way that children are.

She has launched a petition for the profession to be properly regulated, with unsafe carers barred from the job.

The former flight attendant, 62, from Shillingstone, Dorset, hired a carer two years ago to look after her husband Richard, 78, a former pilot with 16 years’ service in the RAF who then flew planes for Dan Air.

He had been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s in May 2020.

When carer Rachel Goodman arrived at her door in November 2023, Louise was impressed.

Goodman presented all the right paperwork including a clean Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) certificate. But before long, things began to go missing. At first small items disappeared. Fearing the worst, Louise searched Goodman’s name on the internet and was horrified to discover she was a convicted criminal with 13 offences. She had stolen Louise’s late mother’s engagement ring, a 200-year-old family heirloom and jewellery given as gifts by Richard.

JET SET: Louise is an ex-flight attendant and Richard a pilot

Louise said: “I felt really freaked out knowing this woman had been in my home, caring for my husband and then rifling through my home. It made me feel sick.”

Goodman, 54, from Yeovil, was found guilty of theft in July and received a 12-month suspended sentence from Weymouth magistrates.

But she is still free to work as a carer, as a gap in the law means carers in England don’t have to be professionally regulated, registered or subject to enhanced DBS checks to work in someone’s home.

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said: “We are committed to reforming adult social care and have launched an independent commission chaired by Baroness Casey which will make clear recommendations on how we can deliver a National Care Service and a social care system fit for the future.”

‘Vital unpaid carers feel badly taken for granted by system’

By **Hanna Geissler** HEALTH EDITOR

RISING numbers of unpaid carers feel they need more support and recognition from the NHS, a major survey reveals.

Around 4.7 million people in England provide care to friends or loved ones who are older, disabled or living with chronic health conditions.

Although their efforts have an estimated economic value of £152billion per year, research suggests many feel undervalued and overlooked by the healthcare system.

Carers UK’s 2025 State of Caring survey of more than 10,x500 current and former carers discovered 51% need more support – compared to 42% two years ago.

Half want more recognition from the NHS, up from 42% in 2023.

A lack of consultation and engagement with carers was a key concern. Just 14% said they were asked about their ability and willingness to provide care when their loved one was discharged from hospital.

Less than one in five feel confident that any feedback or complaints made about health and social care services would be acted on.

Noting the NHS and care system would collapse without the millions of unpaid carers, Carers UK chief executive Helen Walker said: “We are really worried about the growing number of carers struggling with their own health due to the enormous pressures they are under.” She said if they reach breaking point, the NHS then has two people to look after.

CALL FOR CULTURE CHANGE: Carers UK CEO Helen Walker

She continued: “Given the value of carers’ support, it’s not too much to ask to ensure that they are identified and supported. We need a culture change from the NHS around carers, rooted in law.”

On top of greater recognition, healthcare professionals should be encouraged to think more about carers and their health, while technology should be harnessed in order to make carers’ lives easier, the charity said.

Caroline Abrahams, of Age UK, said the findings made “a compelling case for the NHS to do a far better job in including and supporting essential unpaid carers” – and called the statistic about hospital discharge conversations “terrible”.

Meanwhile, a recent Alzheimer’s Society survey found 38% of carers do not feel respected by social care professionals. Seven in 10 said caring had negatively impacted their lives, with a third reporting a decline in their mental health.

The charity’s Emily Hindle said: “Our survey paints a bleak picture for people affected by dementia. It reveals that one in five carers have received no support, and, of those who have, fewer than half were satisfied with it.”

She said the charity is committed to ensuring unpaid carers “receive the statutory support they are entitled to.”

‘I feel invisible and we have no voice’

SHERENE Snowdon, 42, has felt “invisible” since becoming an unpaid carer for her husband Lee, 46.

He suffered a life-changing traumatic brain injury five years ago and she juggles supporting him with caring for their children, one of whom is on the autism pathway.

Sherene said: “There is no voice for carers.

“I’ve had a feeling of being invisible as a carer since Lee’s brain injury.

“There should be resources and proper recognition of the fact you’re an unpaid carer by the NHS, but at the moment there is nothing like that.

“It’s exhausting. My experience has been a real lack of communication and little empathy.”

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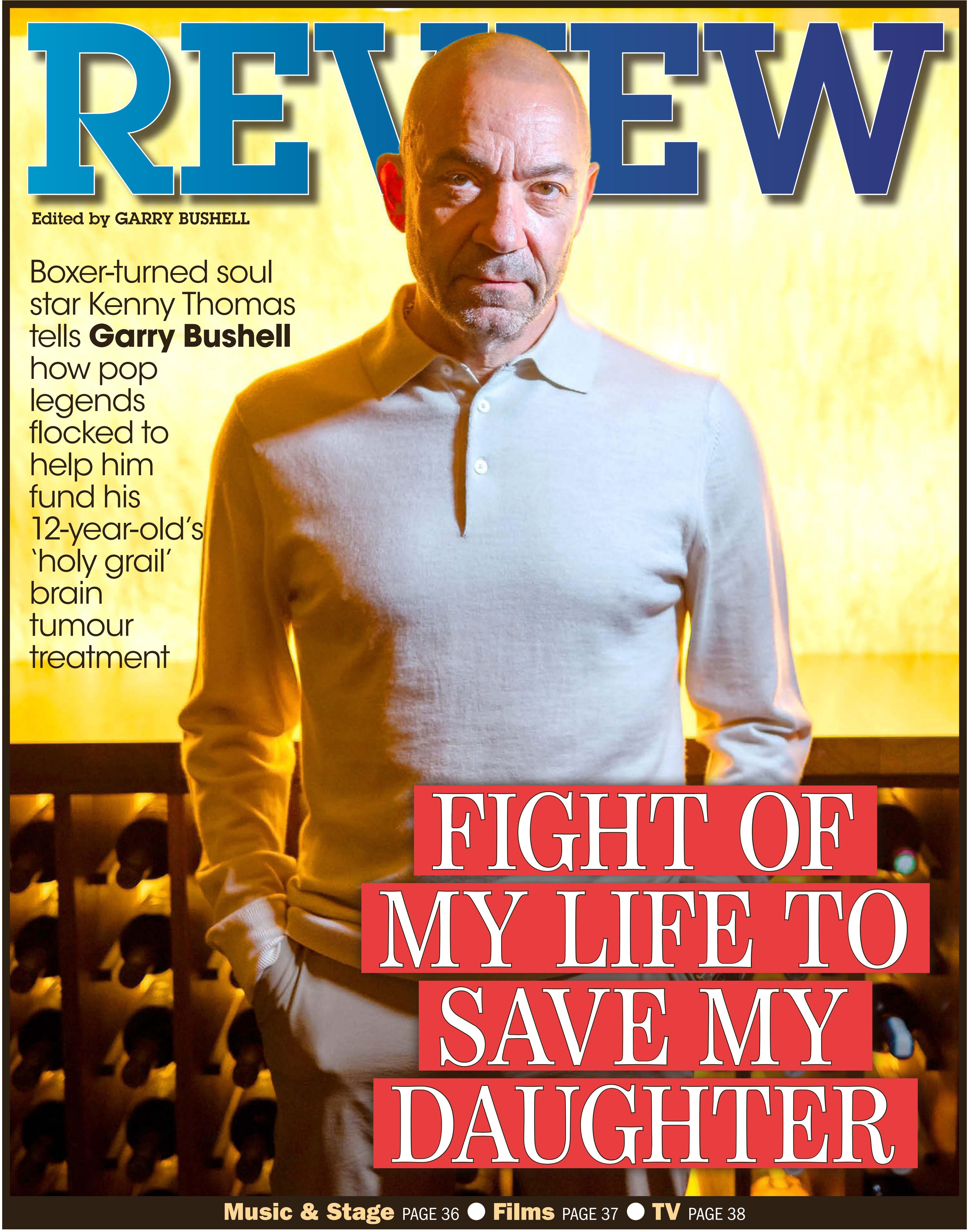
REVIEW

Edited by GARRY BUSHELL

Boxer-turned soul star Kenny Thomas tells **Garry Bushell** how pop legends flocked to help him fund his 12-year-old's 'holy grail' brain tumour treatment



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FIGHT OF MY LIFE TO SAVE MY DAUGHTER

Music & Stage PAGE 36 ● **Films** PAGE 37 ● **TV** PAGE 38

REVIEW: MUSIC

Of all t
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DEFYING THE ODDS Kenny's daughter Christina undergoes vital treatment

HE IS THE ex-boxer from a London council estate who turned himself into a platinum-selling 90s soul star. But for the last eight years, Kenny Thomas has been fighting a very different battle – to save the life of his youngest daughter.

Christina, 12, was diagnosed with a life-threatening brain tumour when she was four.

"I was told it was inoperable, and therefore terminal." Kenny, 56, recalls. "They gave her six months."

Some parents might have accepted that, and the standard course of disease-managing chemo and palliative end-of-life care. Thomas did not.

The singer, best known for his 1991 smash Thinking About Your Love, has a Bachelor of Science degree in Chinese medicine and was aware of alternative cancer treatments.

"I was talking to doctors abroad and looking at things like immunotherapy. An Indian professor told me that if I was looking for the holy grail of brain tumour treatment, I should look at dendritic cell therapy in Germany."

Although hugely expensive, the family's many visits to Cologne kept Christina alive. "All the boxers I've met and she is the greatest fighter," Kenny beams. "She's a walking miracle, defying all the odds."

The tumour – a high-grade glioma – has not grown for some time. "There's been some shrinkage, and it remains stabilised. The doctors are happy because it's not progressing. Thanks to the cell therapy we might have got ahead of the curve."

> "At school I was a naughty boy but now I've come good

Kenny was set to shoulder all the costs, but music biz buddies rallied round, including soul stars Jocelyn Brown and Omar.

He'd been singing with 80s group Living In A Box, whose keyboardist Marcus Vere also stepped up. "Marcus put on two fundraising nights in Chelsea with Tony Hadley, Midge Ure, Kim Wilde, Carol Decker, Heaven 17, Go West, Beverley Knight, Nick Kershaw...I had to pinch myself."

The shows raised £40,000, enough to cover the Cologne trips. "If I'd done it alone, we'd have been on the floor now financially, but you'd do anything to save your daughter's life."

Not for nothing is Kenny's new album called Unstoppable. "I am relentless," he says. "I don't give up on things. I can't let something go; once I get the bit between my teeth I go for it."

Admirable surely? "It can be, but it can also be annoying. Ask my wife Francisca. As soon as she wakes up, I'll be reminding her she's got vocals to do" – in the recording studio can-do Kenny has built on the side of their five-bedroom Norwich home.

Thomas grew up on a council estate in Stamford Hill, North East London, listening to soul-loving DJs like Robbie Vincent and Greg Edwards, and pirate stations pumping out the latest American tracks.

"I bought soul, jazz-funk, funk, Rick James...a melting pot" – as were his neighbourhood pals, from multiple ethnic backgrounds, united by their love of US soul.

Kenny's father, Big Ken, an ex-pro boxer in the building trade, loved Johnny Mathis; his Gran-Canaria-born mother Maria adored reggae star John Holt.

"I could mimic Mathis reasonably well and I'd sing along with John Holt. People remarked how adaptable my voice was."

Kenny got involved with a band in their local church, playing guitar and singing, while also being a keen amateur boxer, with 50 fights under his belt. It only became a problem when he got his first job at city bank Williams & Glyn's.

"I was due to work on the cheque counter with customers, but I'd just fought a very tough kid who beat me on points – we went the distance, but a rocketing swing broke my nose, and I had a couple of shiners.

"I turned up for work, they took one look at my mangled face and stuck me on the franking machine in the post room for the first year. I finally realised showing up to the office with a black eye wouldn't work, so I knocked boxing on the head."

HE LEFT after eighteen months. "I got bored. Deep down, I knew I had something else to be. Not necessarily famous – I wasn't one of those kids. I just wanted to be around music, and recording studios."

His first recording deal fizzled out, so Kenny started working for British Telecom. A demo he'd cut, covering the Gap Band's Outstanding, landed him a new deal with Cooltempo. And in 1991, Outstanding went Top 15.

Thinking About Your Love reached No 4. More hits followed, including Best Of You, and his debut album Voices went double-platinum.

Early on, Kenny encountered hostility at gigs. "There were a couple of occasions when I've had

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STILL PACKING A PUNCH Kenny will mark the 35th anniversary of Top Ten album Voices next year; below, in his boxing days

Picture: SIMON NEWBURY/ALAMY

to defend myself. Someone came at me and it didn't go so well for him."

He had eight hit singles and two Top Ten albums before manufactured pop bands boomed. "I was warned it'd happen and told I'd have to ride it out. But I never stopped gigging, writing and recording. I wrote a song that Rod Stewart recorded, a song George Benson recorded. I got in the studio with the boy bands and worked with them..."

Out of curiosity, he did his three-year BSc course and is a qualified practitioner of acupuncture & Oriental medicine.

"I still study alternative medicine now. Some people are into train sets, I'm into that."

Kenny met South African-born Francisca at a 2007 charity gig in Cheshire. "She was singing, I was singing, we had a chat after that. She was staying in Manchester I took her out on a date – me, her and Shane Richie who was doing theatre up there.

"I'd told Shane I'd met this girl, and he said come to the show and hang out. BT earned a lot of money out of me phoning Cape Town that year. I knew she was the one. We got married in 2008 in a registry office and again in 2011 in a church." They have two sons and two daughters.

In 2016, Kenny fronted Living In A Box, after singer Richard Darbyshire turned down a chance to reform, but their gigs started to clashed with his.

Last year he sold out the London Palladium. "Magical, all together in a collective moment...I'm just part of it."

He first played the Royal Albert Hall in 1991 with Edwin Starr, Freddie Jackson, Donny Hathaway, Mica Paris – "all the people I'd grown up with; I'll never forget that."

KENNY'S latest irrepressible album Unstoppable features a duet with Kim Wilde and huge songs like If I Can't Have You. He also recorded a fresh take on Thinking About Your Love; the classic number went viral on TikTok after he performed it at London's King's Cross station with DJ AG two months ago.

Laughter keeps Kenny buoyant.

"Remember when comedians were funny?" he asks, smiling. "I like the old comedy – Tommy Cooper, Spike Milligan, Morecambe & Wise; Ronnie Barker was an absolute wordsmith.

"My dad had a lively, sarcastic building site wit; you had to watch yourself around him. And Christina makes me laugh. She said to me, 'Dad, I know you're getting old but I won't chuck you away, you're still useful.'

"And the other day she said, 'Dad, you look like a movie star…you should make horror movies'. She probably didn't mean it like that sounds, but we were rolling around in the kitchen."

Next year he'll mark the 35th anniversary of Voices with The Unstoppable "best-of" tour.

"I'm selling out bigger venues now than I did at the beginning of my career – Hammersmith Odeon next year, we didn't do that at the height of it.

"At school I was a naughty boy, but now I've come good. It's nice. Anyone who wants to get under my bonnet should read my autobiography, Burying My Soul.

"I'll never retire. The best way to go is like Tommy Cooper did — on stage, doing the thing you love."

● *Kenny Thomas' new album Unstoppable is out now. The Unstoppable Tour takes place in March 2026, tickets are available now from KennyThomasMusic.com*

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REVIEW: MUSIC and THEATRE

MUSIC

with JAMES CABOOTER

David Byrne Who Is The Sky? ★★★★★

There's a simplicity to Byrne's music that comes across as weird yet fascinating. Everybody Laughs possesses a childlike quality, but his ability to twist with an arrangement or amusing turn of phrase is his superpower. Closer in spirit to his mid-90s work, the incredible Ghost Train Orchestra and drummer Tom Skinner provide the collaborative wildlife. Reassuringly quirky throughout.

Suede
Antidepressants ★★★★

Suede still sound as visceral as anyone half their age. Brett Anderson extols the virtues of beauty and decay full throttle, so much you can almost feel his saliva in the choruses. Dancing With The Europeans soars like a half-eaten doner kebab flung from a night bus, and Somewhere Between An Atom And A Star is perhaps their finest ballad since The Next Life. A dopamine hit!

SG Lewis
Anemoia ★★★

Coming on like a Ministry compilation, Sam digs deep into past eras sprinkling his own unique pop. Opener Memory along with Shygirl-assisted Sugar provide nostalgic Balearic 4am back-of-the-cab ride memories. Oliver Sim goes full filtered disco on Baby Blue while London Grammar's Hannah Reid gets tropical on Feelings Gone. Anemoia is immersive dance history.

Tom Odell
A Wonderful Life ★★★★

Emotions are at the forefront here and Tom reaches his peak on this sumptuous seventh album questioning faith, social media and his very essence. It's beautifully recorded, capturing the rawness. There's some difficult listens, including the self-loathing Ugly, but Tom's ability to connect lifts the soul, and for those missing early Arcade Fire this could be what you need.

STAGE

with STEFAN KYRIAZIS

BORN WITH TEETH
★★★ Wyndham's Theatre to November 1, wyndhamstheatre.co.uk

Doctor Who's Ncuti Gatwa and Edward Bluemel ferociously fight and flirt (with light fondling) as Will Shakespeare and Kit Marlowe in Liz Duffy Adams's riotous reinvention of the relationship between the two greatest Elizabethan playwrights.

But this two-hander never reaches a satisfying climax, often great fun but basically all foreplay.

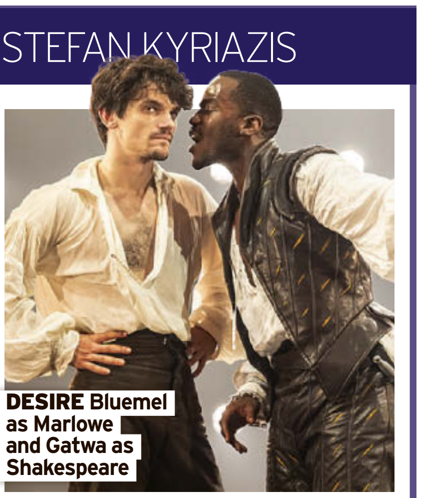
Framed around three writing sessions of Henry V, parts 1, 2 and 3, which many scholars argue were a collaboration between the two, Marlowe starts out the meteoric star. The diffident Shakespeare, still a jobbing actor, is labelled a hack before the dynamic shifts with his rise.

Murdered at 29, Marlowe's rakish reputation has endured, but Adams also highlights other shady aspects as he tries to recruit his fellow artist to high-stakes espionage, and clumsily suggests a soppy longing for love.

There's fun in the early imbalance of power, an electrifyingly physical Gatwa revelling in his desire to "devour" every worldly pleasure and "seek heaven in the flesh".

Cod-period leather has never looked sexier as the Rwandan-Scottish actor stalks his quivering prey, brandishing his "throbbing quill". He crawls sinuously across a huge table, leaps off it and, shirtless, bicep curls it.

I trust the set furnishings had their own intimacy coordinator. But it jars that Shakespeare is so unworldly and coy, shocked by sex and spying, denying his own desires, only wanting to work. Yes, the Bard was a grafter, but he was also a grifter and opportunist. Seriously, was there ever a writer who better understood how the world works?



DESIRE Bluemel as Marlowe and Gatwa as Shakespeare

Adams's writing is fluid and packed with historical minutiae, an extra layer of delight if you know your Tudors. She works in her subjects' own wordsmithery (the title is a quote from Henry VI part 3) and achieves some of her own. The simple staging contrasts powerfully with three spotlight-studded walls and dynamic use of a huge video screen.

But for a short play of 90 minutes, no interval, with an entertaining premise and two charismatic leads, the repetitive sexual, political and artistic themes can drag.

Despite the stars' talent, the rushed reach for poignancy and emotion at the end isn't earned and doesn't convince. These teeth gnaw and nibble but never truly bite.

POWER Gatwa takes a leap of faith

REVIEW: CINEMA

with
DAMON
SMITH

STAR RATINGS ★★★★★ Excellent ★★★★ Good ★★★ Worth a look ★★ Poor ★ Don't bother

LET DOWN Denzel Washington

Caught in a rap

HIGHEST 2 LOWEST

Cert **15** ★★★

On Apple TV+ now

Director Spike Lee and actor Denzel Washington collaborate for the fifth and potentially final time on a plodding and anticlimactic thriller based on Ed McBain's novel King's Ransom, previously filmed by Akira Kurosawa as High And Low.

Music mogul David King (Washington) was once feted as the "best ears in the business" but now he is struggling to remain relevant with the company he founded, Stackin' Hits Records, in an era of AI-generated songs.

KIDNAP Joseph and Wright

At a critical time for the business, David receives a shocking telephone call: his teenage son Trey (Aubrey Joseph) has been kidnapped. The ransom is $17.5million in Swiss bank notes, which David and wife Pam (Ilfenesh Hadera) agree to pay to bring their boy home safely.

Detective Earl Bridges (John Douglas Thompson) subsequently reveals that Trey is safe and David's godson Kyle (Elijah Wright) has been taken instead.

"You expect me to pay for some kidnapper's mistake?" snaps David, suddenly tightening his purse strings and breaking the heart of Kyle's father (Jeffrey Wright).

Highest 2 Lowest is a disappointment compared to Lee and Washington's previous work including Malcolm X and Inside Man. A centrepiece chase sequence by train, cars and motorbikes is slickly orchestrated and ups the tempo before a belaboured final act that strains credibility. Washington's performance is largely one-note and supporting roles struggle to find pleasing emotional harmonies in Alan Fox's script.

> “ **Chase by train and motorbikes ups the tempo before the final act strains credibility**

Lee's picture is swamped by a melodramatic score composed by Howard Drossin that repeatedly draws unwelcome attention in scenes that require no orchestration at all.

Notably, two key sequences incorporate live music performances on screen instead, including a perplexing freestyle rap battle between Washington and A$AP Rocky, who plays the rapper-turned-kidnapper.

Sadly, my attention wasn't held hostage for the entire 133 minutes.

THE CONJURING: LAST RITES

Cert **15** ★★★

In cinemas now

Last Rites is a fitting subtitle for the ninth and final chapter of the highest grossing horror franchise of all time, which brings the story of demonologists Ed and Lorraine Warren's full circle with a whimper that sounds like a death rattle.

It's 1986 and Ed (Patrick Wilson) and Lorraine (Vera Farmiga) have retired their spooky services to protect Ed from another heart attack and concentrate on their daughter, Judy (Mia Tomlinson).

Good friend Father Gordon (Steve Coulter) alerts the Warrens to the Smurl family in Pennsylvania who claim to be under siege from an evil presence. Lorraine deduces the insidious darkness is something they have encountered before.

The Conjuring: Last Rites wheezes and puffs for the best part of 90 minutes before tentatively springing to life in a final 45 minutes laden with demonic dolls and tormented spirits that lurk in the shadows.

Director Michael Chaves's picture achieves one predictable jump scare but languishes for extended periods in limbo between gloomily atmospheric and creepy.

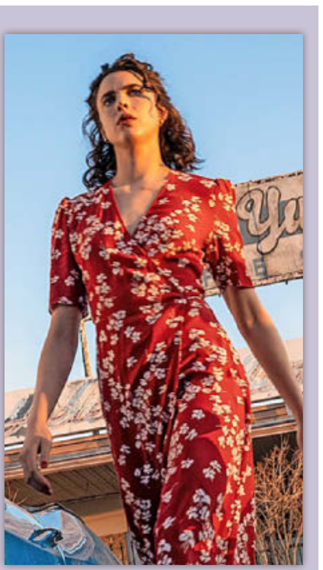
Farmiga and Wilson repeat their dauntless double act, splashing through gallons of imagined blood, while new additions Tomlinson and Ben Hardy as Tony Spera are slowly established as the next demon-busting crusaders. Some mantles are best left untouched.

FINAL OUTING Vera Farmiga and Patrick Wilson

HONEY DON'T!

Cert **15** ★★★

In cinemas now



EXUBERANT Qualley livens things up as private eye Honey

Superstition suggests bad luck comes in threes. If that's true, it doesn't bode well for next year's Go, Beavers! – the concluding chapter of director Ethan Coen's lesbian B-movie trilogy, which began with the lacklustre Drive-Away Dolls and continues to underwhelm with the loopy crime drama, Honey, Don't!

Private detective Honey O'Donahue (Margaret Qualley) blunders through an investigation into the death of prospective client Mia Novotny (Kara Petersen) in a car accident. Using her police contact MG Falcone (Aubrey Plaza), Honey tracks down Mia's parents and learns about their daughter's recent activities, including her willing admission to the flock of the Four-Way Temple led by charismatic reverend Drew Devlin (Chris Evans).

Honey Don't! takes a pleasant but forgettable drive through genre tropes that have served Coen well in the past with his brother Joel, including Blood Simple and Fargo, but the writing and its impact here are duller. A sprightly running time limits the disappointment.

The haphazard journey and the picture's ultimate destination are all familiar, enlivened by Qualley's exuberant embodiment of an opportunist with a persistently high libido.

Sparse character development restricts the number of potential suspects for Honey to finger before she unwittingly cracks the case. Bloody and simple.

AT ODDS Poulter and Edgar-Jones as husband and wife

ON SWIFT HORSES

Cert **15** ★★★★

In cinemas now

Secrets and lies breed like rabbits in this sensitively handled portrait of conflicted morality and repressed desires adapted by screenwriter Bryce Kass from Shannon Pufahl's novel.

Mild-mannered war veteran Lee Walker (Will Poulter) plans a life of quiet domesticity in California with wife Muriel (Daisy Edgar-Jones) and younger brother Julius (Jacob Elordi).

Restless after an early discharge from the Army, Julius instead seeks his fortune in Nevada and sparks forbidden desire with casino co-worker Henry (Diego Calva). Meanwhile, Muriel conceals her run of good fortune at the horse-racing track and contemplates an affair with another woman.

On Swift Horses canters leisurely through the pages of Pufahl's book, riding high on compelling performances from the central trio. Elordi cements his matinee-idol status while Edgar-Jones and Poulter unpick their on-screen marriage at the seams and let messy emotions spill out.

Director Daniel Minahan choreographs electrically charged sex scenes, contrasting characters' unabashed joy in private with the tightly coiled anxiety of public facades.

The final act's quiet devastation is surprising after a sustained build-up of dramatic tension, and the angst of one romantic pairing resolves with a convenient serendipity that only seems to exist on a big screen.

BUSHELL ON THE BOX

with GARRY BUSHELL

MY TV LIFE

Kiell Smith-Bynoe

East London-born Kiell, 36, is best known for playing Mike Cooper in the BBC1 sitcom Ghosts

What was your first TV memory?
Playschool. I remember my nan and grandad having a small TV in their bedroom which was still black and white. You had to press a button on the set to change channels.

Who was your first TV crush?
There were two – Ginger Spice, probably on Top Of The Pops but they were everywhere, and Sarah Michelle Gellar as Buffy The Vampire Slayer. I loved the show and I loved her. I had pictures on my wall of both of them.

What was your first TV appearance?
Acting, it was on ITV's Victorian crime drama Whitechapel, but I'd done a short film with Kyla Frye before that called Where's My Supermalt? which is on YouTube.

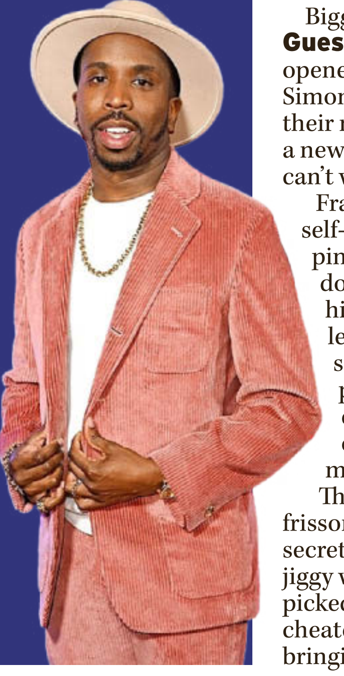
What is your favourite current show?
Mayor Of Kingstown, an American crime thriller on Paramount. It's incredible. I've seen three seasons and I'm eagerly anticipating the fourth.

Which TV show would you take to a desert island?
Stath Lets Flats. I know I'm in it, but it's so good, so funny, it's my favourite show. You spot something extra every time you watch it.

What TV show would you like to put out of its misery?
The Big Bang Theory. It makes me sick. E4 is a fantastic channel, I would have it on all day if it wasn't for The Big Bang Theory. I watched it once and only got as far as the first ad break. Not funny.

Guiltiest TV pleasure?
I used to love Take Me Out with Paddy McGuinness. My friends knew not to call me on Saturday e venings. When it was on, I was uncontactable.

What are you up to at the moment?
I've just taken my improv show Kool Story Bro to Edinburgh – it will be at the Soho Theatre, Walthamstow on October 4. And before that I'm in Mitchell & Webb's new show.



● *Mitchell And Webb Are Not Helping is streaming now on Channel 4*

GARRY BUSHELL

Beeb's drips ensure that romance is dead

I DESPAIR of the BBC. Once a vital part of our national culture, they have clearly run out of drive, ideas and judgment. Their latest wheeze, **Stranded On Honeymoon Island**, is a belated attempt to catch up with Love Island, Too Hot To Handle, Love Is Blind, Flex On My Ex and Look At Me, I'm Starkers (I only made one of those up).

The BBC1 show incorporates elements of the equally dumb Married At First Sight. Single wannabes go speed-dating and choose their favourite. Then "relationship experts" pick the one they'll marry in a "not legally binding" Philippines beach ceremony.

They take the plunge, literally, to reach their under-stocked honeymoon shack. And after three weeks living alone together, with just bugs, scorpions and a camera crew for company, they progress to Couples Cove where other options are available…And they say romance is dead.

The show makes a mockery of marriage and squanders licence fee money that'd be better spent developing mass-appeal comedies or a much-needed modern-day equivalent of 50s show Free Speech.

The only thing in its favour is it isn't Dating Naked UK. Give them time. It almost makes you pine for the cheesy innocence of Blind Date.

BBC1's imported hit The Traitors inspired lesser knock-offs like ITV's The Fortune Hotel and now Channel 4's ratings bomb **The Inheritance**. The premise is simple. Liz Hurley is dead – rigor mortis is clearly setting in as she struggles with the autocue – and like The Traitors, contestants form tactical alliances, take part in dull challenges, and back-stab their rivals as they battle for modest chunks of Liz's loot.

Lovely Liz is The Deceased and Robert Rinder is her Executor. But C4 missed a trick. Where is greedy villain Rachel IHT plotting to nab 40% of their winnings?

Bigger pickings are at stake on **The Guest**, a bash-the-rich BBC1 drama that opened with Fran's businessman husband Simon complaining that all the mugs in their mansion were dirty. "I know, we need a new cleaner," she replied. Wealthy folk can't wash up, you see.

Fran set her sights on Ria, a hard-up self-employed cleaner reduced to pinching food from a supermarket donation point. Within minutes of hiring her, Fran delivered a Class War lecture: "Successful people aren't smarter or better than you, they just play by different rules…the only difference between private and comprehensive education is the mentality." Really?

The implausible set-up included a frisson of homo-erotic tension and Ria secretly filming Fran (Eve Myles) getting jiggy with employee Richard. The action picked up in the closing minutes as Ria cheated on her layabout boyfriend by bringing Mike, an online hook-up, back to "her" mansion. They took cocaine and got fruity in the designer kitchen. But Fran kept ringing, Ria panicked, and they fought brutally. (Point of order: cocaine makes people laugh at their own jokes, not batter one another with pokers).

OUT OF THEIR DEPTH
Davina McCall and drenched couples on Stranded On Honeymoon Island

At the death, Mike plummeted to his doom like Del-Boy's chandelier, just in time for Fran to arrive… The Beeb claim it gets better. We'll see. They said King & Conqueror was good and that lost viewers like Starmer's losing voters.

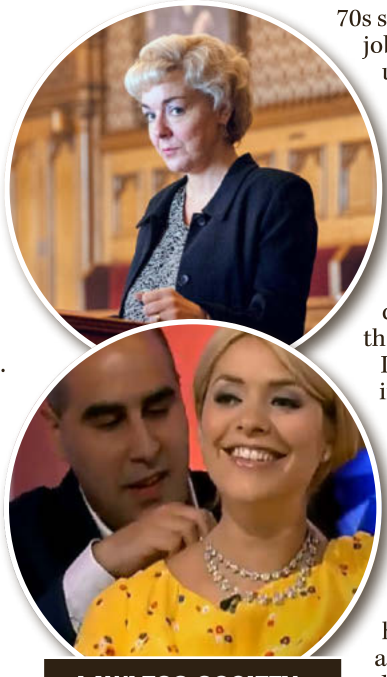
Drama of the week was ITV's **I Fought The Law**. Sheridan Smith was magnificent as Anna Ming who, in real life, fought for 15 years to change UK law so her daughter's brutal killer could be retried.

Should someone commission a sitcom about incompetent coppers who ignore cat burglaries and car thefts to collar TV comedy writers for tweeting the "wrong" thing? Decades ago, the idea would have been laughable, now it's a dismal reality. Five armed officers arrested Father Ted co-creator Graham Linehan, 57, for the crime of making a joke the Met chose to misinterpret as an incitement to violence. Oddly, London's finest didn't interpret Jo Brand's suggestion, on a BBC comedy show, that battery acid should be thrown in Nigel Farage's face as incitement.

Would the late John Sullivan risk arrest in today's Big Brother climate for creating Citizen Smith? After all that witty 70s sitcom popularised a job-shy, self-styled Marxist urban guerrilla who hero-worshipped mass-murderer Che Guevara…I'm kidding of course.

Modern-day Citizen Smiths are busy calling the shots on mainstream TV channels, and drawing up the November budget.

I'd have been more impressed to see police collaring Vashi Dominguez, the Spanish jeweller who disappeared leaving debts of £170million. Richard Bilton's **Panorama** investigation suggested his business operated like a Ponzi scheme. The Met didn't care. He hadn't tweeted.



LAWLESS SOCIETY: Sheridan Smith in I Fought The Law, top; Vashi Dominguez and Holly Willoughby on This Morning in 2014

For the record, no trans woman was punched "in the balls" in the aftermath of Graham's joke back in April. There is a case for locking Linehan up though. Given the paucity of most modern comedy, he should be confined to a room with his old writing partner Arthur Mathews (another rock press alumni), until they create another winner.

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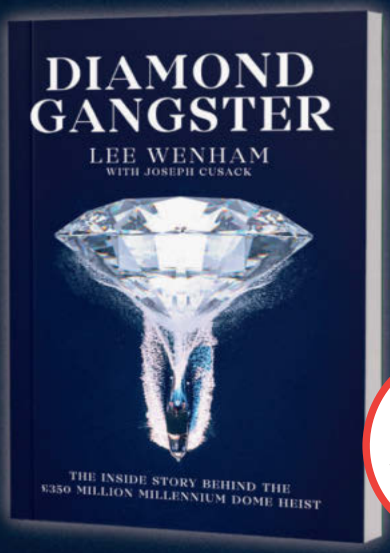
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IN THE

WINTER'S WILDLIFE

with STUART WINTER

VIBRANT But fiery redstarts have had hard times

High hopes of redstart restart

Birdwatchers near and far are hot on the fiery tails of arguably our most vibrant songbird – the paint-by-numbers marvel that is the redstart.

Catching sight of one of these visions in red, white and blue does not so much spark patriotic pride but induces that feel-good hormonal rush that comes from experiencing natural wonders.

Even in the post-breeding days of early autumn, when males are in a subdued state of moult and young birds and females are plumed in brownish hues, one quick flash of their shimmering, quivering tails always leaves you feeling all is good in the world.

The redstart – "staart" is the Dutch word for tail – has always held a special place in my heart, having seen one as a child in an auntie's London garden – an event that sparked a lifetime's fascination with birds.

> **One flash of shimmering tails leaves you feeling all's good in the world**

Since then, I have followed the fluctuating fortunes of redstarts with fingers crossed that I'll still encounter them every year when they arrive from African wintering grounds to nest in British woodlands or agricultural land with ancient hedges and gnarled trees. Sadly, a double whammy of environmental events has impacted on the redstart's range and numbers over the past seven decades – although, ironically, climate change may now be having beneficial effects by driving an earlier spring arrival with increased breeding rates.

In the late 1960s, a severe drought brought a sharp decline in a number of well-known species that winter in the African Sahel, the arid scrub belt that stretches from Senegal east to Eritrea.

Redstarts, whitethroats and sand martins all suffered from food shortages because of the lack of rain.

Back on British soil, redstarts have witnessed a huge 31% range contraction, vanishing as nesting birds in the southern lowlands as mature hedgerows disappear.

Hopefully, times are changing.

The past few weeks I have delighted in astonishing views of a procession of redstarts as they flit and dart along the hedgerows around our village, flaring their tails to hint at the coppery, autumnal tones that are to come.

FOLLOW STUART ON TWITTER:
@BIRDERMAN

SCENT Crocus 'Ruby Giant'

ONE TO WATCH Nectar-rich 'Pheassant's Eye'

Plant bee and butterfly friendly bulbs now for a happier spring garden

One of my favourite jobs every year is planting bulbs in autumn. Bulbs are one of the easiest plants to grow. These magical parcels contain everything the plant needs to mature and, when planted in the right conditions, delight in spring.

Generally they prefer soil that is not waterlogged so if your soil isn't free draining, consider planting in pots instead or at least put some grit beneath the bulbs to aid drainage. And remember the rule of thumb is to plant them at a depth of two or three times their height.

Spring bulbs are a valuable source of early nectar and pollen for our pollinating insects such as bees, hoverflies and butterflies, providing sustenance, along with spring-flowering shrubs, plants and trees.

The pollen contains protein that helps them produce eggs and reproduce and bees will also use it to feed their young. Nectar is the carbohydrate that gives them energy. One of

GARDEN

with DIARMUID GAVIN

gardening@express.co.uk
Sorry, Diarmuid cannot reply personally

See you later pollinator

PICNIC Allium 'Purple Sensation'

APPEAL Grape hyacinth

the earliest to flower is crocus that usually emerges in February just as the queen bumblebees are coming out of hibernation and need some protein to start reproduction.

'Ruby Giant' is a striking cultivar with large rich purple petals and a lovely fragrance. As it's small it's a good choice for window boxes or pots where you can inhale its lovely scent.

March brings muscari, known as grape hyacinth. It is also small enough for your window boxes or containers and the clusters of small flowers are packed with nectar. They will naturalise quite quickly in your borders and are a good choice for unpromising soil.

LOCATION Right soil for planting

The ribbons of rich blue flowers complement most spring planting schemes but if you want to keep them under control, confine them to your containers.

Modern hybrid daffodils and tulips have been bred for colour and elaborate petal shapes, rendering many of them either difficult to access for pollinators or low in pollen and nectar. However the smaller species tulips have simple open nectar rich blooms and have the benefit of returning reliably year after year.

The 'Pheasant's Eye' daffodil, Narcissus recurvus is not only beautiful but is also nectar and pollen rich.

The pristine white petals and central orange and yellow corona make this a striking and elegant species that will naturalise well.

Alliums are a picnic for our flying pollinators. Also known as the ornamental onion, each flower head is made up of many small flowers so a bee can bop about from one to the other without using up much aviation fuel. 'Purple Sensation' is one of the best known and the sight of these perfect purple spheres dotted through a border is always a winner.

> **“ A bee can bop from one to the other without using too much fuel**

If you choose a variety of different bulbs that bloom at different times, you are keeping pollinators fed over a longer period.

We need these little insects to fertilise our crops, so it works both ways.

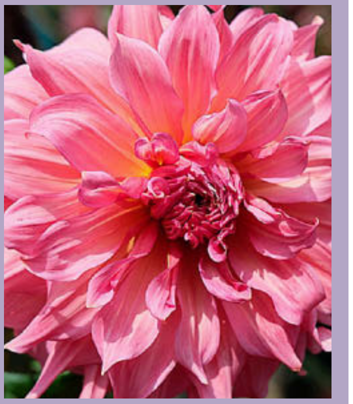
Pollinators have been in decline due to habitat loss and pesticide use but by planting spring bulbs over the next few months, we can help restore some of their numbers.

JOBS for the week

- Get a head start with hardy annuals. These can be sown in situ or in trays.
- Squeeze the last drop out of flowers in hanging baskets, pots and containers - keep deadheading and feeding weekly.
- Meadow flowers that are dying back are ready for their autumn chop. Cut as close to ground as possible and remove any cuttings. This allows light in and helps new seed germination.
- Remove summer raspberry canes that have finished fruiting. Support fresh green canes which will bear next year's fruit. It's a good time to order fruit bushes so you can get them planted in the dormant season this winter.
- Dry days make good seed collection days. Armed with a brown paper bag and pen, shake the seed into the bag and label.
- Biennials such as foxglove may have self-seeded randomly around your garden - these can be dug up carefully and replanted where you want them.
- It's a good time of the year for soil improvement while the earth is still pliable and not waterlogged - dig in your garden compost or fork in some well-rotted manure.

PLANT of the week

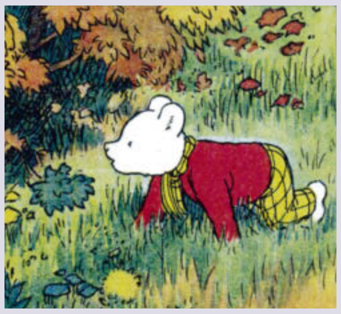
Dahlia 'Islander'



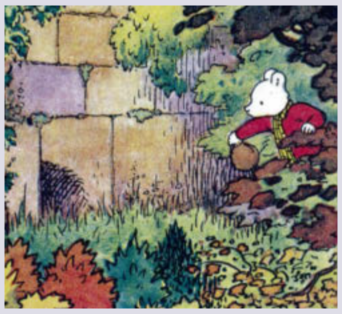
Dahlias bring lots of colour to September plots and keep flowering through October as well. They come in many shapes, sizes and colours, so whether you like simple open blooms (and our pollinators definitely do) or the more elaborate eye-catching types, there's an endless choice available now. 'Islander' is a tall decorative dahlia with large rose-pink blossoms, and each petal is slightly curved. It's quite a statement plant and will also make a superb cut flower. It's best grown in full sunshine in good fertile soil, and tubers should be lifted and protected over winter, except in milder coastal areas.

Rupert

Rupert And The Autumn Primrose
EPISODE 21



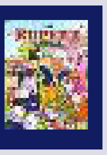
Then Rupert, on his hands and knees,
Starts scrambling underneath the trees.

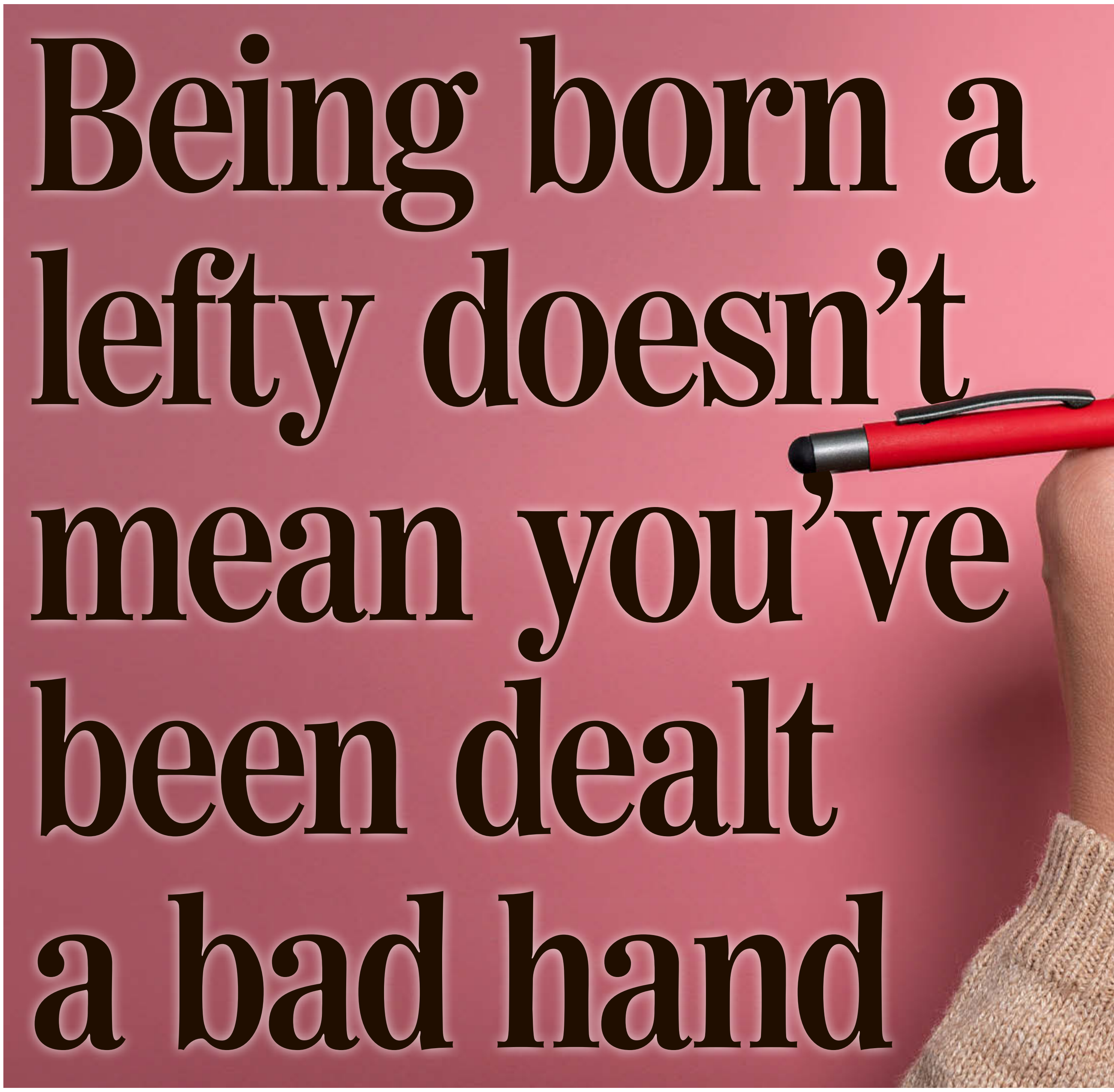


“Why, here's a hole right through the wall!
I can't get through it's much too small.”

Rupert goes in pursuit. “He seems to know the way quite well,” he mutters. Jock trots steadily forward, and at length disappears amongst dense bushes. The little bear burrows his way through, and on the other side he is faced with a stone wall. There is no sign of the dog, but Rupert notices that one of the lowest stones has started to crumble, leaving a small gap near the ground. “That's all right for Jock,” he thinks as he examines the hole, “but it's too small for me.”

To order a copy of the Rupert Annual 2024 (£10.99) visit www.expressbookshop.com or call Express Bookshop on 020 3176 3832. Free UK P&P on online orders over £25.





Being born a lefty doesn’t mean you’ve been dealt a bad hand

Around one in 10 people are born with a preference for using our left side. But while being left-handed has drawbacks in a world designed for right-handers, there are some surprising advantages too. Here **Tanith Carey** explores the pros and cons of left-handedness and what they can mean for your health

Why are we left-handed?

Whether you are left- or right-handed is largely ruled by how your brain is wired before birth.

Each hemisphere of the brain controls the opposite side of the body. So if your left hemisphere is more dominant, you are most likely to use your right hand, and vice versa.

Having one dominant hand may seem like a quirk, but there is likely a good evolutionary reason. It would take longer and mental effort to constantly swap hands for the same tasks.

Preferring one hand saves time and energy, a tendency that can be spotted even before birth. A recent study from the International School for Advanced Studies in Trieste, Italy, found foetuses start preferring to use one hand more than the other as early as 18 weeks.

The scientists discovered this accurately predicts which hand the child will favour after birth in 100% of cases.

However, whether you are left or right-handed usually only becomes clear when toddlers begin to develop fine motor skills and start to draw or use cutlery at mealtimes.

> “Lefties tend to recover more quickly from brain injuries and strokes

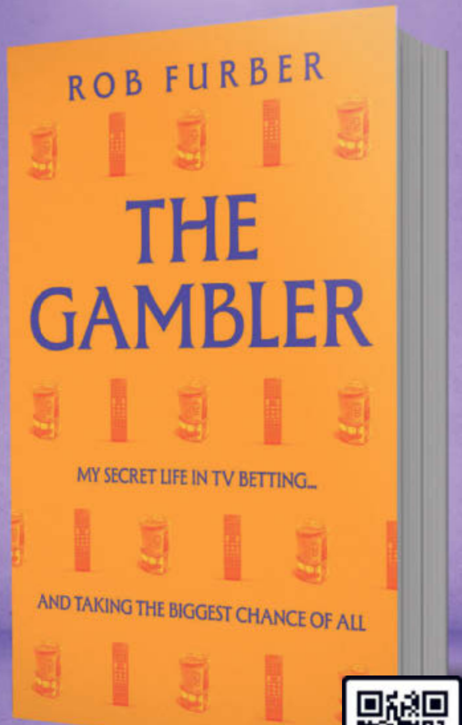
Evidence of human left-handedness can be seen through history, with archaeological finds of tools adapted for left-hand use dating back half-a-million years.

You are likely to be left-handed due to a combination of genetics and environment. So if you have a left-handed parent, you are up to 25% more likely to be left-handed too.

Gender also plays a role

Around 12% of men are left-handed, compared with 8% of women.

Researchers believe this is because the fluctuations of hormones like testosterone to help boys become more masculine can also affect the development of the brain’s hemispheres in the womb.



What kind of person is willing to stake so much on the Eurovision Song Contest?
One man’s secret life in TV betting
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HEALTH

Edited by
MATT NIXSON &
HANNA GEISSLER

IF YOU'RE LEFT-HANDED YOU'RE MORE LIKELY TO...

Be more accident prone

Living in a right-handed world isn't just inconvenient. It also carries physical risks. Most tools, machines, devices and cars are designed for right-handers. This means using them needs more effort and concentration, boosting the likelihood of accidents for left-handers, according to a wide range of research.

This includes one study in the American Journal of Public Health, which found that among 1,900 university students, left-handers were nearly twice as likely to report having had an accident which needed medical treatment over the last two years.

Need to be more vigilant about your stress levels

Being left-handed is more than about which hand you choose to write with. Studies have found it may effect your heart health too.

A 2023 study in the journal Frontiers in Cardiovascular Medicine found that left-handers had slightly stiffer blood vessels, which could increase the risk of heart disease. One possible explanation is that the way left-handed brains are wired may affect the regulation of the "fight or flight" response.

Constantly adapting to a right-handed world can build up stress, causing the heart to beat faster and blood vessels to tighten. Over time, this can reduce elasticity.

Be better at recovering from strokes

The better news is that left-handers often recover more quickly from brain injuries and particularly strokes.

Research in the Journal of Economic Perspectives in 2015 found left-handers are better at recovering their balance and concentration after strokes.

This may be because the brain regions involved in attention and spatial movement are distributed across both hemispheres in left-handers. This means left-handers may suffer less damage to this area if they are hit by a stroke and be more able to use other parts of their brains to compensate.

Have the edge when it comes to quick-reaction sports

Are you a whizz with a tennis racket or cricket bat? If you're left handed, you've got a definite advantage in these sports.

Left-handers often excel in sports requiring quick reactions, such as tennis, table tennis, cricket, and football, according to a study in the journal Biology Letters.

One theory is that your opponents, who mainly play right-handers – have had less practice knowing how to respond to you. So as a left-handed player, you get the edge, all due to the element of surprise.

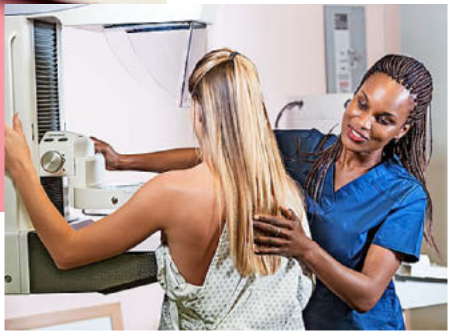
Among the world's top male table-tennis players, for example, the study found 26% of the males and 19% of females were left-handers, twice the rate of the general population.

According to Dr Florian Loffing of the University of Oldenburg, Germany, who led the study: "We're less used to playing lefties and so might not develop the optimal strategies to compete with them."

Be more likely to need early breast checks, but less prone to arthritis

If you're a left-handed woman, start your breast checks early.

That's because some research has found that left-handed women may have a higher risk of breast cancer before menopause.



Dutch researchers at the University Medical Centre in Utrecht, Netherlands, studying 12,000 middle-aged women over 10 years, believe early exposure to certain hormones in the womb – which also influence brain hemisphere dominance – may play a role in raising the cancer risk. On the other hand, the good news is that left-handers appear less likely to develop arthritis, according to a 2015 study in the journal Laterality.

Although the reasons are not yet fully understood, one possible reason is left-handers have to use both sides of their body more evenly to adjust to a world designed for right-handers, so there's less wear and tear on the same joints.

Be more prone to sleep jerks

Being left-handed also makes you much more likely to wake up with a start, according to a 2011 study in the journal CHEST.

Usually, the brain sends signals to stop muscles from twitching during sleep.

But as you relax, this blocking mechanism may pause, making your muscles jolt.

However, researchers found that 94% of left-handed sleepers experienced these sudden jerks as they fell asleep, compared with 69% of right-handers.

They believe this may be all down to differences in how motor control regions are more evenly spread across both brain hemispheres in left-handers, making misfires more likely.

RETAIL THERAPIES

■ If you are a fan of Innersense haircare, wait until you try the Innersense Body Collection. Not only do the products look beautiful but just like the hair range, they are crafted with natural and organic ingredients and are cruelty-free and vegan. The Awaken Body Wash (£26 at ohmycream.co.uk and Cult Beauty) is a gentle, nourishing cleanser with organic avocado oil and chufa milk, while the Renew Body Lotion (£28) is a lightweight, hydrating lotion enriched with kokum butter and pea peptides.

■ **LED masks have been big news for some time now but they can also cost big money. But Revolution Beauty (revolutionbeauty.com) has just launched a Pro Miracle LED Mask priced at a more wallet-friendly £59.99. It has seven LED light treatments to help calm, smooth and rejuvenate skin, in just 15 minutes a day and promises visible results in two weeks. Simply cleanse, secure the mask with the adjustable strap, and choose your preferred setting. There's also a 30-minute rotation that cycles through all of the light therapies.**

■ Is it too early to start talking about Christmas? Avant Skincare, doesn't think so. It has already launched its 2025 Wonders Advent Calendar. Having sold out three years in a row, the luxury calendar returns with 12 of Avant's award-winning, high-performance skincare heroes – all full-sized – valued at £935, for £99. There are also "golden tickets" hidden in select boxes that could win you up to £1,000 worth of Avant skincare.

■ **Treat parched lips to lasting hydration with Mario Badescu's new Watermelon & Basil Lip Mask (£13.50, Space NK, Cult Beauty, ASOS) a luscious jelly-textured treatment designed to deeply nourish and replenish dry lips while you sleep. Infused with a watermelon scent and a hint of herbaceous basil the ultra-hydrating mask cocoons lips in moisture, leaving them softer, smoother, and more supple by morning.**

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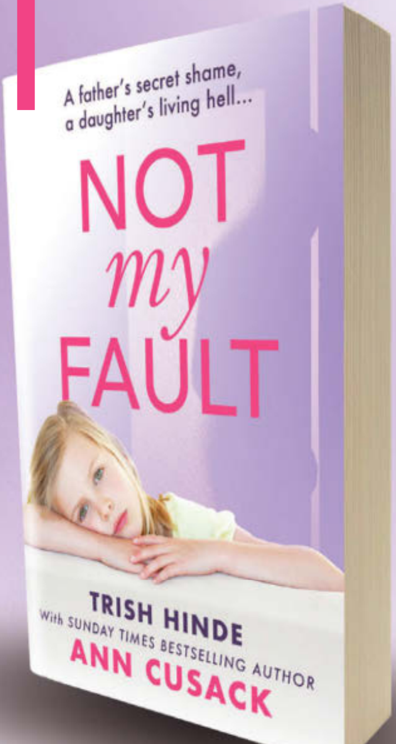
A FATHER'S SECRET SHAME,
A DAUGHTER'S LIVING HELL...

NOT *my* FAULT

'What mattered was that someone listened to me. Someone believed me after 25 years. That means everything.'

By the writer of ABANDONED and THE CONVENT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Edited by
NIGEL
THOMPSON
@TravelEdNigel

email **traveldesk@reachplc.com**
X **@TravelEdNigel**
@LissamanVicky
online **express.co.uk/travel**
instagram.com/dailyexpresslifestyle

Eck of a time in Bradford

Fiona Whitty finds there's a lot more to this UK City of Culture than its cracking curries

"People only have bad words for Bradford," said our Uber driver with palpable frustration. "But it's a really great place – lots of history, lovely buildings, amazing scenery."

After spending time in the West Yorkshire city on a short break, I couldn't agree more.

Bradford made its name during the Industrial Revolution when its easy access to coal, iron ore and soft water helped make it the global centre for wool in the 19th century. By 1850, two thirds of all England's wool was made there and its population had ballooned from 13,000 to more than 100,000 in just 40 years.

But when textile production declined last century so too did Bradford's fortunes.

Today, however, it's turning a corner. Impressive Victorian buildings built on wool's success have been reimagined, the city centre reinvented and a thriving arts scene nurtured. Spend some time there and it doesn't take long to see why it was named this year's UK City Of Culture. Bradford 2025

CONTINUED OVER THE PAGE

SEEING THE SIGHTS Fiona (right) and pal Catherine outside Bradford City Hall

HEAD TO THE HILLS Penistone Hill Country Park

LAPPING IT UP Fountains in Bradford city centre

UK air travel is flying high back to pre-pandemic levels and more, says the Civil Aviation Authority, with a record 81 million passengers passing through the nation's airports between April and June and 75% of flights operating on time, up from 67% in 2024. caa.co.uk

Vacation value

BUDGET-FRIENDLY HOLIDAYS
BY **VICKY LISSAMAN**

A historic city in Bulgaria boasting white sandy beaches, a Unesco-listed old town and beer for under £2 tops a new ranking of affordable coastal breaks in Europe.

Nessebar, which sits on a small peninsula in the Black Sea, was named best-value destination in the easyJet Cheap Beach Index. For those who aren't ready to let go of summer just yet, it's ideal, with quiet shores, blue sky forecasts and plenty of availability at waterfront restaurants, with flights from just £32.99 and hotel deals.

Close behind is the Budva Riviera which boasts a string of idyllic beaches along a 22-mile stretch of Montenegro's Adriatic coast. In third is Costa de Almeria in Spain, known for the Tabernas Desert and golden beaches. Medulin and Nin in Croatia, Costa Blanca and Costa del Sol in Spain and Halkidiki in Greece made the list for competitive apartment and hotel costs.

The table was compiled by analysing areas within easy reach of airports that offer affordable direct routes to the UK, along with the price of a typical holiday shopping basket which includes beer, ice-cream and a family meal out.

Kevin Doyle, easyJet's UK country manager, said the Index offered a brilliant variety of value choices for "one last dose of summer sun and fun".

Demand is rising for "snack" holidays, says UK travel specialists Super Escapes, where 80% of recent bookings have been for shorter high-quality breaks. With travel costs rising, Brits are choosing three-five-night stays at premium resorts over two-week breaks as a budget way to enjoy luxury travel.

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TRAVEL

Hotel of the week

BY **BRIAN DICK**

Radisson Blu London Mercer Street, Covent Garden

WHERE AND WHY

Finding somewhere tranquil to escape in the busy environs of London's Covent Garden is not easy, yet the Radisson Blu, right on the Seven Dials roundabout, provides just that.

Smart and modern, right in the heart of one of the city's most interesting areas, the location is first class – among cobbled streets and surrounded by boutiques, restaurants and bars.

The Radisson Blu is at the centre of theatreland and a short stroll to the capital's markets and the Underground.

Reception is snappily smart with friendly staff who make check-in and orientation around the hotel very easy.

Our sixth-floor en-suite room was not the most spacious but there was a very large bed. The decor was tasteful. The snug bathroom had an over-the-bath shower with all the towels and products you'd need. Our night was very comfortable. From the window we could see the Shard and the London Eye in the distance.

The Monmouth Kitchen serves breakfast from 7am and offers all-day dining. There's also a decent gym if you're so inclined.

ON THE MENU

Restaurant

The restaurant can get busy before theatre time but we ate early from the half Peruvian, half Italian a la carte menu.

It might not sound exciting but the Robata corn on the cob (£9) was tasty. The wild-mushroom rigatoni (£14) was pleasant, as was the chicken and spinach risotto (£19), which was de-chickened for us veggies yet still bursting with flavour.

Dessert was a delectable white chocolate and vanilla mousse (£12) and a vegan brownie (£9.50) that made my mouth water.

Breakfast (£29) was an interesting buffet offering delivered with a twist. For the traditionalists there's the usual full English options. My partner requested poached eggs which were perfect in execution and taste.

For lighter starts to the day there are pastries, granola, fresh fruit salads and colourful continental options. The apple and cinnamon bircher muesli is excellent.

WHILE YOU'RE THERE

The hotel bills itself as the perfect location for theatregoers and it really is. We took in the rip-roaring Back to the Future, a 10 minute amble away and stopped for a drink in one of Covent Garden's many traditional British pubs. A delightful evening.

WAKE-UP CALL

A Premier room starts at £395 plus VAT, per night. radissonhotels.com

INSPIRED Bradford's version of Big Ben

TUCKING IN Fiona and Cath try the Asian cuisine at MyLahore

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

offers a whole series of events and showcases right through to the end of December and even into early 2026. Many are free.

It's also easier than ever to get there because LNER has just tripled its services between London and Bradford with seven direct trains each way a day. You can also change at Leeds.

I took a short break there with my friend Catherine and as Bradford is so compact and walkable we started with a city centre stroll to take in the sights.

The stunning Venetian-inspired City Hall, built during the wool boom and now Grade I listed,

Selection of Bradford 2025 highlights

- **YOU: MATTER** – an immersive experience exploring how everything on our planet descended from stars, with sculpture, projection, sound and hands-on activities. National Science & Media Museum until February 2026, £2 or more.
- **We Will Sing** – a huge installation using music, the printed word and fabric to evoke Bradford's textile heritage. Salts Mill until November 2. Free entry.
- **Ice Age Art Now** – an exhibition of artworks from up to 24,000 years ago. Cliffe Castle, Keighley until September 14. Free entry.
- **Make Yourself At Home** – a photographic exhibition curated by young people that tells the story of Bradford past and present. Impressions Gallery, September 13 to December 20. Free entry.

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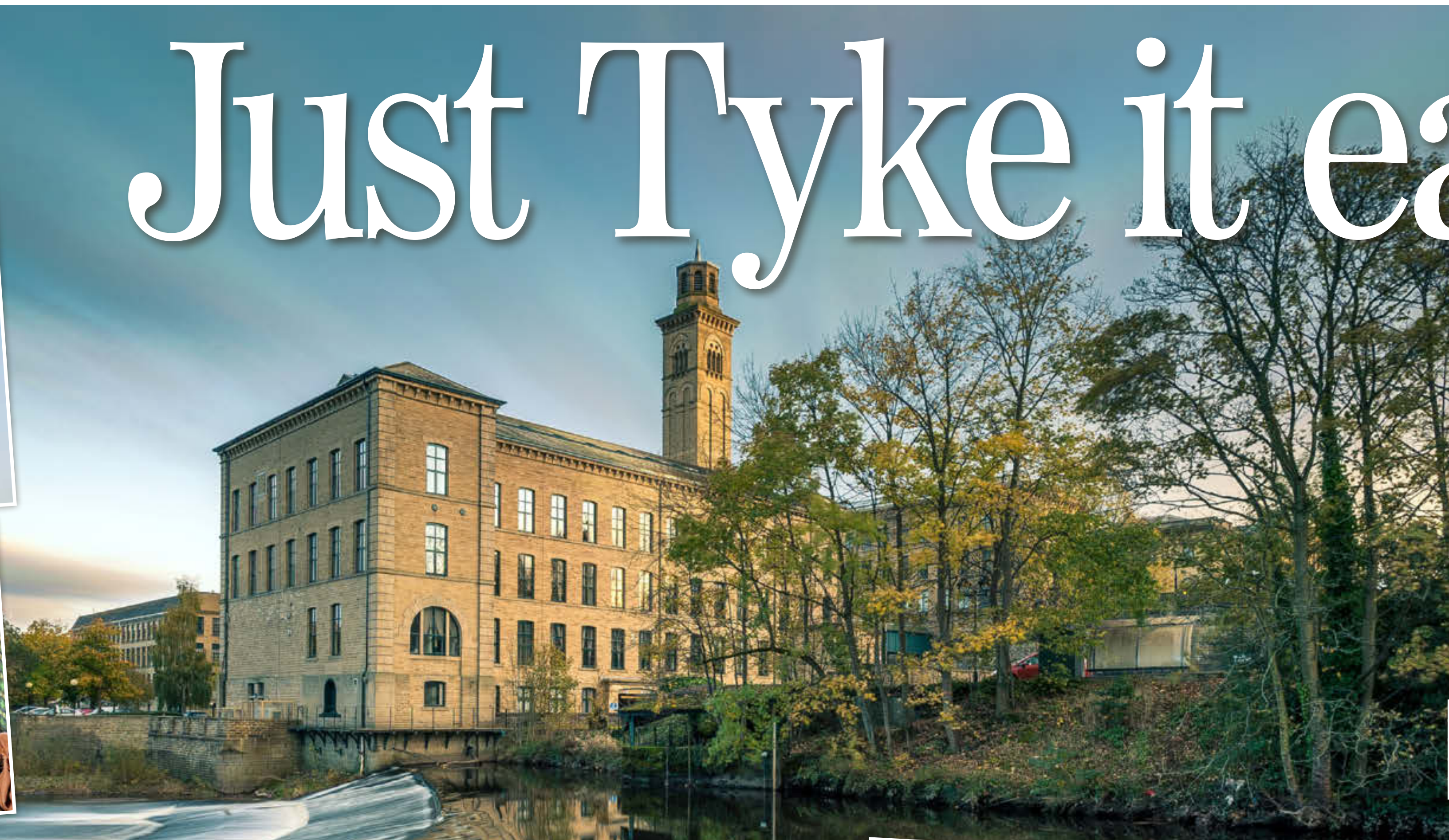


MUST SEE Salts Mill has works by Hockney

ALE AND HEARTY Saltaire Brewery

CATCH IT LNER train to Bradford Forster Square

HUGE FUN At National Science & Media Museum

HIGH ART One of the Wild Uplands sculptures

features Bradford's very own Big Ben – a 220ft tall clock tower inspired by the Palazzo Vecchio in Italy's Florence.

Alongside, the modern Centenary Square is a symbol of the city's regeneration, featuring more than 100 fountains, laser lights, mist and music for daily shows.

Quirky cafe The Cake'ole is the ideal haunt from which to view it – and perhaps try the Yorkshire Pud dessert, served with ice cream and chocolate gravy. (facebook.com/CakeoleBradford)

Nearby, the huge glass-fronted National Science & Media Museum, fresh from a £6million refurb, houses Europe's first ever IMAX cinema, Yorkshire's biggest independent cinema and galleries.

And next door lies the Alhambra Theatre with Arabic-style domed roofs, columns and arches – and Bradford Live, which has just opened a 3,800-seat music venue.

I loved the way the old and new blended effortlessly together.

Bradford is also often referred to as the UK's curry capital thanks to its raft of South Asian restaurants, inspired by the wool trade workers who came to the UK in the 1950s and 60s.

Keen to try some, we strolled to Sweet Centre, one of the first to open in Yorkshire and a real gem for authentic nosh.

Started in 1964 by brothers Abdul Rehman and Mohammed Bashir to provide mill workers with a taste of home, it sold Asian sweets before expanding into savoury meals too. Today it's run by the family's third generation, headed up by chef Waqar Ali Mughal who still cooks original family recipes.

CHEERS Fiona samples the delights at Saltaire Brewery

Waqar and his father Dr Zulficar Ali welcomed us with warm smiles – and delicious mango lassi – before serving us some of their favourite dishes, like fish marinated in their own special masala, homemade chicken pakora and a chickpea curry dubbed Bradford's best.

> **“ I loved the way that the old and the new blended effortlessly together**

The food was incredible – and together with the laid-back atmosphere we felt like we were dining in a friend's home (sweetcentrebradford.co.uk). Bradford Metropolitan District takes in a huge swathe of gorgeous West Yorkshire countryside and picturesque villages. A 10-minute train away is Saltaire, a village built in the mid-1800s by wool baron Sir Titus Salt. Designed to house workers from his Salts Mill factory, it's now a Unesco World Heritage site and the mill itself has been beautifully repurposed into galleries – including works by Bradford-born artist David Hockney – small businesses and a couple of cafes. A short stroll down the River Aire later led us to Saltaire Brewery, set up 20 years ago in an old electric sub-station for trams by two mates who had met on a brewing course. Nowadays they're producing five million pints of craft ale a year. Cath and I toured the site before tasting some of their finest, including their Triple Choc stout (yes, it really does smack of chocolate). My favourite was the crisp South Island Pale Ale, made with New Zealand hops famed for their fruitiness. As an added perk, Saltaire's taproom has a glorious beer garden where you can sip pints and enjoy food vans and live music – perfect for a sunny afternoon like we had. (Tours £15, saltairebrewery.com)

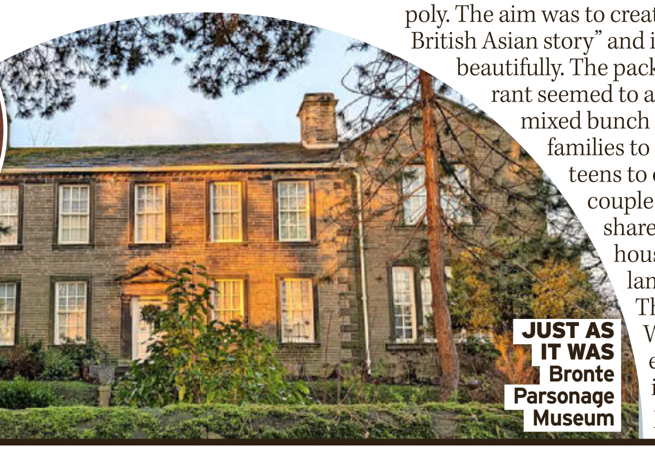
PRECIOUS Charlotte Bronte's writing desk

Also on Bradford's doorstep is the Bronte Parsonage Museum, the family home in Haworth where Charlotte, Emily and Anne wrote novels such as Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall. The house, a short Uber ride or bus from Keighley train station, is furnished how it was back in the 1800s and is full of mementoes from the precious writing desks where the sisters slogged away to dresses and bonnets they wore. (£13, bronte.org.uk)

DELICIOUS Chickpea curry at Sweet Centre

Afterwards we hiked up the hills behind to a new Bradford 2025 sculpture trail called Wild Uplands, which winds you through the atmospheric moors and past a string of sculptures and installations. The views were breathtaking.

We were staying at the Midland Hotel, built during the wool boom and handy for Bradford Forster Square train station and city centre landmarks including MyLahore (mylahore.co.uk), a restaurant with a reputation for fantastic South Asian food plus chicken pie, lasagne and gooey desserts like cheesecake and jam roly poly. The aim was to create “a very British Asian story” and it works beautifully. The packed restaurant seemed to appeal to a mixed bunch from large families to groups of teens to older couples. Cath and I shared delicious house speciality lamb nihari – The downside? We couldn't even squeeze in a jam roly poly to finish.



JUST AS IT WAS Bronte Parsonage Museum

GET THERE

LNER runs direct services from London King's Cross to Bradford Forster Square, calling at Peterborough, Doncaster, Wakefield Westgate and Leeds from £31 single. Single family tickets for up to two adults and four children from £61.50. lner.co.uk

BOOKIT

Rooms at the Midland Hotel in Bradford start at £59 a night. britanniahotels.com

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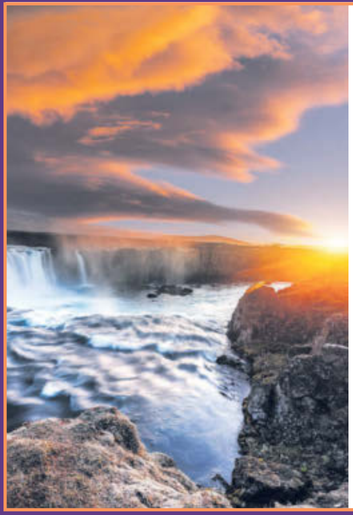

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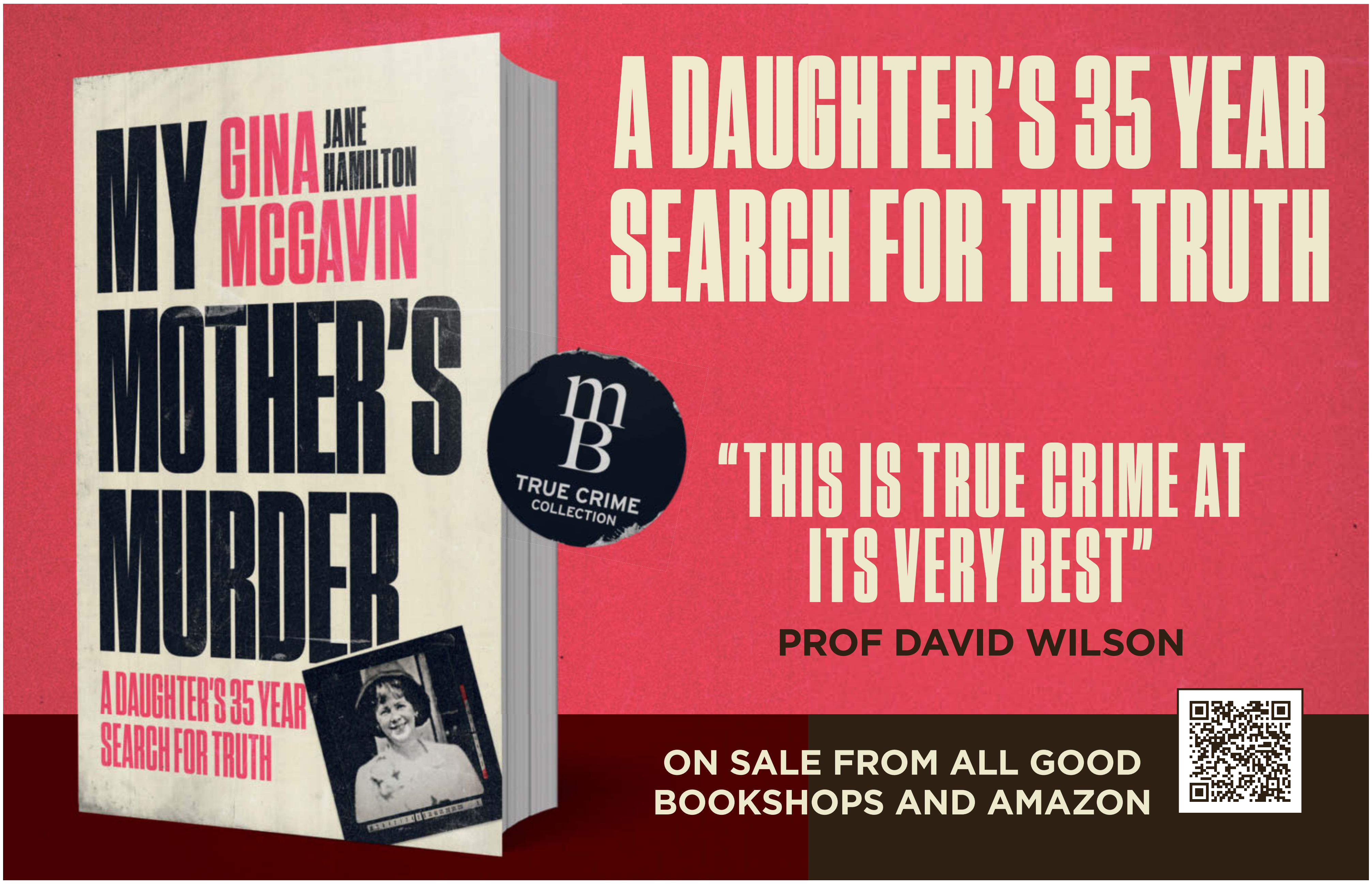

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Kidding around

How to give your children's bedroom a colourful new term makeover

Whether planning a nursery for a new arrival or giving a refresh to a child's bedroom, choosing the right paint for spaces with young ones needs careful consideration.

Colour is, of course, important, but the paint itself needs to be child-safe and Toy Safety Standard accredited, meaning they are safe to use in babies' and children's rooms as well as on toys and furniture.

Here Earthborn Paints colour expert Bailey Williams shares her advice on giving a youngster's room a makeover.

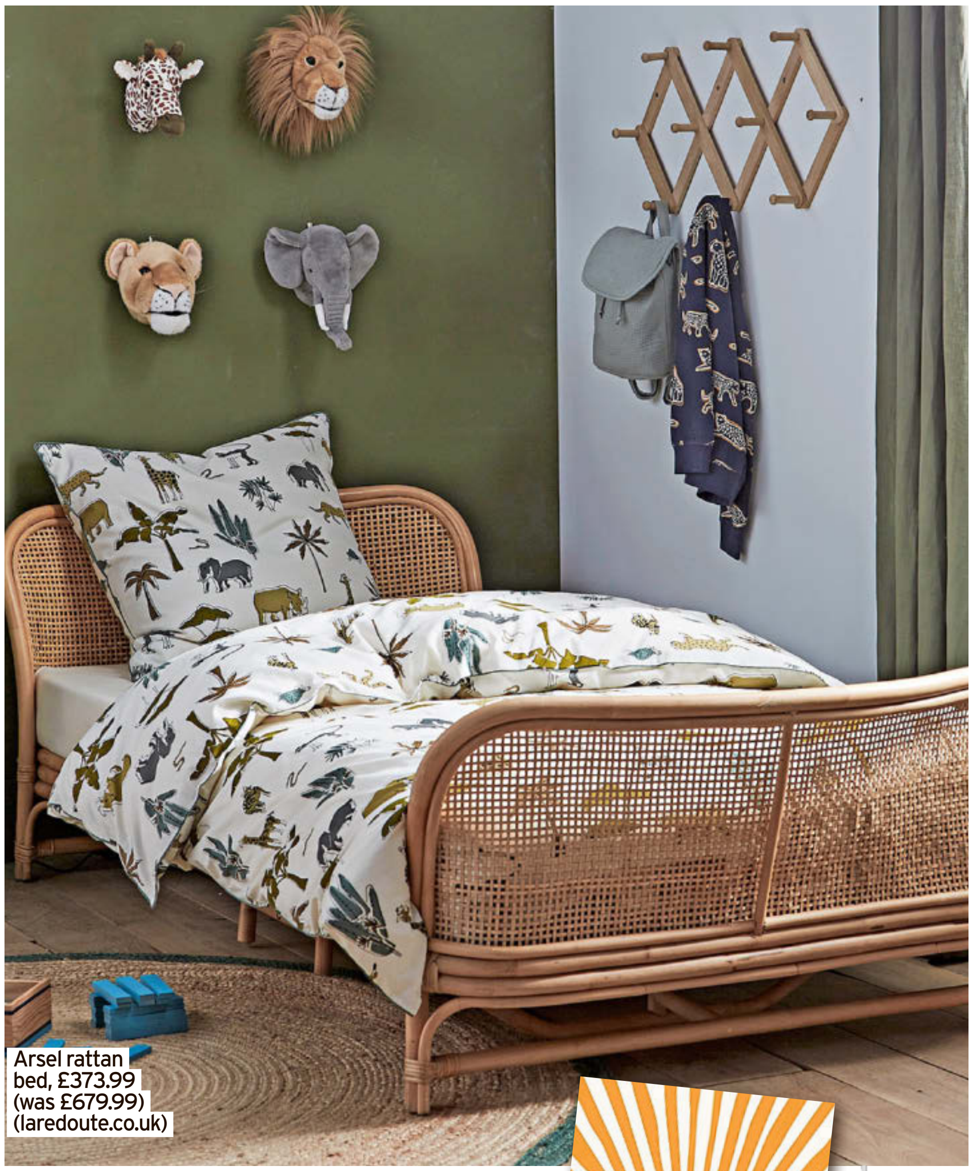
Misty Mountain Landscape mural, £44 per square metre (wallmur.co.uk)

CHOOSE YOUR SHADE

Opt for a charming, soft lilac with grey undertones such as Earthborn's Inglenook, while Sapling, a creamy green, is the perfect pastel for creating a calming bedroom with a nod to nature. A subtle pop of colour will make the space playful and stimulate creativity.

Earthborn Eggshell No. 17 Inglenook, £37 (diy.com)

Children's cord sofa bean bag, £109 (was £200) (bigberthaoriginal.com)



Arsel rattan bed, £373.99 (was £679.99) (laredoute.co.uk)

Stacey Solomon dragon storage basket, £10 (direct.asda.com)

Smiling sun poster, £6.57 (£10.95) (posterstore.co.uk)

Rainbow bedside table, £130 (next.co.uk)

Carnival bamboo lampshade, £25.50 (was £30) (johnlewis.com)

HOW TO USE BRIGHTS

"Brighter shades have their place as focal points in the room such as the woodwork, a feature wall or updating pieces of furniture," says Bailey. For instance, pair ochre shades with orange and yellow tones with a touch of deep green for an eye-catching final result.

Fox rug, £64 (was £80) (gltc.co.uk)

Kids Harley bookcase, £40 (dunelm.com)

Compiled by Ali Graves

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FINANCIAL

SUNDAY EXPRESS

BEAUTY SPOT: Bodycare began trading in 1970 on a market stall in Lancashire

450 jobs will be lost in Bodycare collapse

HIGH street health and beauty retailer Bodycare has collapsed into administration with the loss of 32 stores and around 450 jobs being made redundant.

Founded in 1970 on a market stall in Lancashire, Bodycare trades from 147 stores across the UK and employs around 1,500 people.

Interpath have been appointed joint administrators to GR & MM Blackledge plc, which trades as Bodycare.

They said Bodycare had "faced a number of challenges in recent years which have negatively impacted its financial position.

"Despite the very best efforts of the directors to address these challenges, and with creditor pressure mounting, the difficult decision was taken to appoint administrators".

The joint administrators confirmed they intend to continue to trade the majority of Bodycare's stores – 115 in total – while they "assess options for the business, including exploring the possibility of a sale of the business and its assets".

Interpath added that shops will remain open and operational as usual.

Nick Holloway, managing director at Interpath, added: "In addition, and as a matter of priority, we will be providing support to those employees impacted."

Race to beat Reeves to your pension cash

By **Maisie Grice**

PENSION savers rushed to withdraw their tax-free cash over the past financial year, bracing themselves for possible changes to tax rules on retirement funds.

The amount withdrawn from UK pensions in lump sums rose more than 60% in the 2024/25 financial year to £18.1bn, up from £11.25bn the prior year.

Emma Sterland, chief financial planning officer at Evelyn Partners said, "These startling figures show that the country's pensions savers have been in an unprecedented rush to take their tax-free lump sums."

"You can't help feeling much of this is a slightly panicked dive into pensions sparked by policy change uncertainty."

The surge came after it was announced pensions would be subjected to inheritance tax by April 2027 in the Budget last October, upending many savers' plans for retirement.

The total taken by all savers in the six months leading up to and including March 2025 was £10.43bn, a 36.5% hike on the £7.65bn taken in the six months preceding the Budget.

Similarly, savers withdrawing their tax free lump sum surged by 33% during the six months leading to and including March 2025, to 111,869.

'Savers in a huge rush to withdraw'

Sterland said: "It seems certain some of this was prompted by changes, both actual and feared, to government policy, as well as the cost of living pressures and higher interest rates."

The Government says bringing pensions within inherited estates will raise a total of £1.5bn with the Treasury by 2030. It also claims it will bring 1.5% more estates within the scope of death duties, on top of the current 4%.

But with a black hole of more than £20bn in public finances, the Treasury is scrambling to find where even more revenue could be raised ahead of the Budget on November 26.

This includes speculation the Government will reduce the size of the tax-free lump sum of £268,275 for 25% of funds retirees can withdraw after the age of 55.

Sterland said: "A reduction in tax-free cash would feel to many like the goalposts have been moved down the pitch and will be deeply unpopular. A danger for the Government is tinkering with tax-free cash could weaken pension saving when they have launched a commission to look at how it can be stimulated."

BEAT THE BUDGET: PAGE 55

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SCAN ME

Young men bet on AI for advice

By **Writers Namey**

YOUNG men between the ages of 18 and 34 are more likely to use AI to guide their financial decisions, compared to older generations and women.

Costs and the complexity of traditional professional financial advice were given as reasons for the move to AI, according to wealth management company Handelsbanken.

Nearly half of the male respondents in the survey felt comfortable using AI tools, such as ChatGPT, to manage their investments, compared to 12% of older men. Less than one-in-five women felt comfortable trusting AI.

Stephen Cowling, acting head of wealth at Handelsbanken, said, "While we recognise that AI has the potential to simplify some of the details of financial planning, misleading information can have very damaging financial consequences.

"Professional financial advice is really hard to beat, as it takes your own unique risk appetite into consideration while building a tailored plan." Young men are also more likely to take greater financial risks, showing a much bigger appetite for volatile investments.

More than 10% of men aged 18-34 are excited by the potential gains that can be generated by risky investments, in comparison to just 1% of men aged 55 and above.

Similarly, only 2% of women expressed excitement about the possible returns that could come from making a risky investment choice.

High-risk investment products range from investing in penny stocks to betting capital on opportunities in emerging markets. But, many Gen Z and Millennial men are opting to bet on cryptocurrencies, as the asset continues to lure in increasing numbers of investors.

More than 20% of younger men choose to invest in crypto, 10 times higher than the amount of Gen X men, despite its lack of regulation and bruising history of losses and scams.

Men are also twice as likely to invest in crypto than women. Last year, roughly £649million was lost in the UK to investment fraud, with 66% related to cryptocurrency scams, data from the City of London police shows.

Cowling added: "We know that risk is necessary in the pursuit of financial returns, but it's important to remember that where there is a positive risk of financial gain, there is also a negative risk of loss, which many feel vulnerable to."

ALL KNOWING?: AI as finance guide

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Salesforce can win tech race – if it can deliver

US SOFTWARE giant Salesforce is under some pressure. Despite good performance, 2025 is proving to be a challenging year that has seen the shares lose more than 25% of their value. In fact, the entire software sector is under strain as concerns linger over disruption from AI.

Salesforce is a $230billion software giant helping businesses manage customer relationships, sales and marketing in one place.

Recent second-quarter results were pretty good on the face of it. But shares dipped as investors looked at guidance for the next couple of quarters and saw a slight slowdown in revenue growth was on the cards.

There are two main ways Salesforce can grow from here. Firstly, by bundling its cloud products more effectively and making better use of its large data sets. Customers who use more of Salesforce's products tend to spend more each year.

Artificial Intelligence is the other big growth driver. The Agentforce platform lets customers build AI tools that can work alongside people to analyse data, make decisions, and take action automatically.

Salesforce is making progress here, with more than 6,000 paid AI deals so far. But with around 150,000 customers and growth guidance still pointing to a slight slowdown, these deals aren't moving the needle yet.

Markets have scaled back expectations for a quick boost from AI agents. This is a new technology, but it is likely a question of when, not if, it becomes mainstream. Still, investors will need patience.

But AI can be a double-edged sword. It is becoming easier for new companies to come and disrupt the software space. These smaller businesses are more nimble, agile, and can deliver tailored products at a faster pace – or so the argument goes. The more likely outcome is the large, existing names like Salesforce are the best placed to win in the AI race, so long as they deliver.

Cost controls mean cash flow is much stronger than a few years ago. The balance sheet is healthy too, giving room for share buybacks, a new dividend, and acquisitions.

All in, Salesforce has a strong product range, valuable data, and several growth opportunities. Markets expect earnings to grow at an achievable low double-digit rate over the next couple of years.

If that happens, there's a decent amount of potential upside on offer for a stock that's been under pressure recently.

MATT BRITZMAN
SENIOR ANALYST
Hargreaves Lansdown
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This article is designed for investors who make their own decisions without advice. If unsure whether an investment is right for you, you should seek advice. Shares can rise and fall in value so you could get back less than you invest.

Stay one step ahead of any wealth raids in the Budget

By **Harvey Jones**

RACHEL Reeves will hold her next Budget on November 26, and although that feels some way off, there's no time to lose. The Chancellor seems likely to launch yet another tax raid, this time targeted more at individuals than businesses. The total haul could reach £25billion or more, with some suggesting it might match last year's £40billion.

Jon Hickman, tax partner at accountants BDO, said Reeves may struggle to balance the books by cutting spending alone. "Tax rises to fill an expected Budget shortfall look like a nailed-on certainty."

The challenge is that we don't yet know which taxes will rise. That makes planning tricky, but taking measured steps now could help minimise exposure.

Whatever you do, don't panic – the run-up to every Budget sparks endless speculation, but most of the measures floated will never happen. A calmer approach, focused on using existing allowances, is usually best.

SHELTER

ISAs remain a valuable shelter. The annual £20,000 allowance lets savers shield money from income, dividend and capital gains tax for life.

Pensions minister Torsten Bell, who is masterminding the Budget for Reeves, has previously floated setting a lifetime £100,000 cap on total ISA savings, but this seems unlikely to happen in November.

The £20,000 allowance appears to be safe, but use all you can. Cash held outside an ISA is subject to income tax if the interest exceeds your personal savings allowance, while dividend tax kicks in after £500.

Capital gains tax (CGT) on non-ISA stocks is charged at a maximum 24%, and reports suggest Labour could hike this in line with income tax bands, which would lift the charge to 40% or 45%. Even if this doesn't happen, the case for ISAs is solid.

> **'Carry-forward pension rules allow savers to mop up unused allowances from the previous three years'**

Younger savers should consider a Lifetime ISA, or LISA. Contributions of up to £4,000 attract a 25% government bonus, worth £1,000 a year. Bell has floated scrapping the scheme before, so make contributions before November. However, LISA funds must be used to buy a first home or remain invested until age 60, otherwise penalties apply.

PENSIONS

Pensions are another potential target. Today, contributions attract tax relief at either 20%, 40% or 45%, depending on your tax band.

Labour may flatten this to 25% for all, hitting higher earners hardest. Jason Hollands, managing director at wealth manager Evelyn Partners, suggested making contributions today to get maximum relief.

You can invest up to £60,000 in a pension under the annual allowance. "Carry-forward rules allow savers to mop up unused allowances from the previous three years," Hollands said.

Money invested in a pension cannot be touched before age 55, which rises to 57 from 2028. There have also been rumours that 25% tax-free pension cash lump sum may also be capped at £100,000 or even £40,000, down from £268,275 today. A word of warning – that was mooted at the last Budget but didn't happen. Those who withdrew in advance regretted it. If you were planning to take tax-free cash, it could be worth acting before November. If not, think very carefully.

ASSETS

Married couples and civil partners can transfer assets between them without triggering a CGT bill. If one partner pays tax at a lower rate, they might consider moving money into their name, reducing tax on savings interest or CGT on share gains.

This may also allow couples to double down on their £3,000 annual capital gains exemption when selling larger assets. Another risk is the CGT rate on second homes will rise, and some may be tempted to sell before November 26. However, completing a property sale takes time and this tax measure may not come in.

GIFTS

Premium Bonds are another tax-free shelter. You can hold £50,000 and all prizes are tax-free.

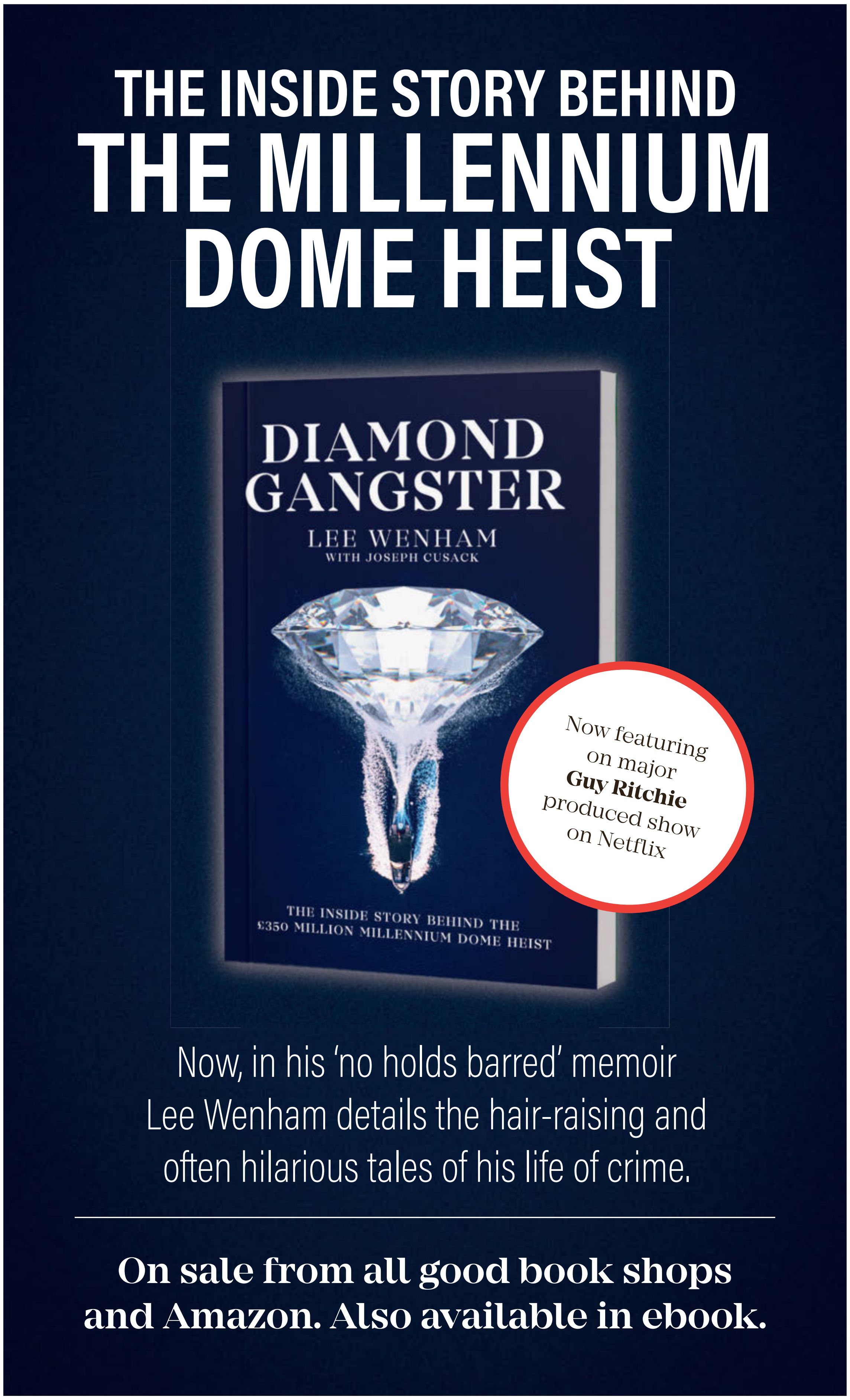
Today, the prize fund rate is 3.6%, and you can get more from a savings account. Also, this prize rate is the average return, there is a danger that in some years you win nothing at all. Premium Bonds won't suit those who need reliable income from savings.

Savers could even consider buying gilts, which pay taxable interest but with any capital gains free of CGT. Gilts are complicated and advice is essential. Labour has its eye on inherited wealth, and middle-class families could be in the firing line. Any inheritance tax changes are unlikely to apply retrospectively, so families considering transfers might want to act before the Budget.

Helen Clarke, partner at law firm Irwin Mitchell, said the delayed timing of the Budget gives families extra breathing room, particularly around gifting and wealth transfer planning. "We're encouraging clients to consider accelerating gifts to make full use of current allowances."

PLAN

Labour's Budget is expected to be tough but measured use of pensions, ISAs, inheritance tax planning, joint allowances and gifting can soften the blow. Clarke urges professional advice: "Consider your circumstances and plan with an experienced adviser before making any changes."



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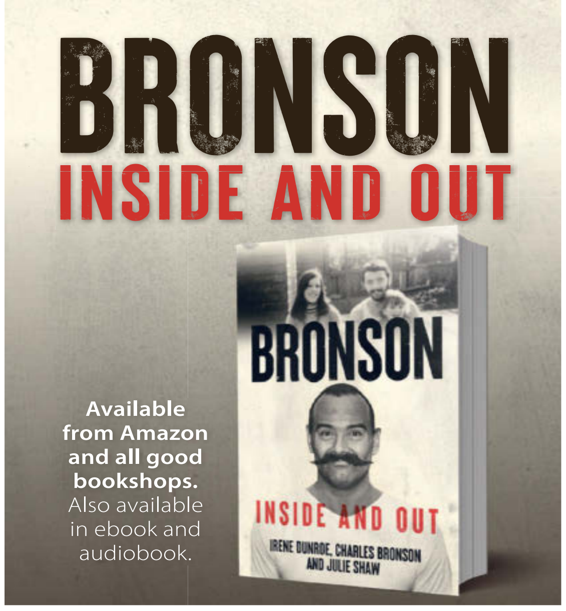

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Make a move on assets

FIVE-MINUTE **GUIDE TO...**

USING EQUITY RELEASE TO REDUCE IHT BILL

By **Harvey Jones**

AS THIS year's Budget looms, families are growing increasingly fearful that Chancellor Rachel Reeves will tighten inheritance tax (IHT) rules again.

Last year, she made unused pensions liable to IHT, in a move due to come into force in April 2027, and this year may bring other measures.

Potential changes include introducing a lifetime gifting allowance or extending the current seven-year exemption on tax-free gifts to 10 years or more.

Either move would drag more households into the IHT net.

Many are already exploring traditional strategies such as gifting, setting up trusts or taking out life insurance to cover future liabilities.

Another option, less well known, is using equity release to reduce the size of your estate.

Equity release lifetime mortgages allow older homeowners to unlock cash from their property without selling.

Interest rolls up and is repaid along with the debt when the homeowner dies or goes into care. Any surplus equity then returns to the estate.

The equity release market is growing steadily. Homeowners unlocked £636million of housing wealth in the second quarter of this year, up 10% on last year. The average lump sums taken rose to £126,422.

FINANCIAL FUTURE: But take advice

Equity Release Council chair David Burrowes said people are tapping into housing equity "to manage debt, boost income and support their wider families".

Alex Chambers, senior mortgage broker at Clifton Private Finance, said growing numbers are using it to reduce their exposure to IHT as well.

However, it's a complex process, and needs to be approached with caution.

At present, IHT kicks in on all assets above the £325,000 nil-rate band, with an additional £175,000 residence nil-rate band where a family home is passed to children or grandchildren.

Married couples can combine allowances to transfer up to £1million tax-free. With house prices high, share prices rising and thresholds frozen until 2030, more families risk breaching the limit.

Taking out a lifetime mortgage and either spending or gifting the money to loved ones can potentially reduce your exposure. The interest you pay on the debt will remove more money from your estate over time.

As an example, a widow with a £1.5million property could release £500,000 and gift it to her children, immediately cutting her taxable estate to £1million.

However, gifts will still be treated as "potentially exempt transfers", and will be subject to IHT if the widow dies within seven years of making them.

If Reeves extends the waiting period in her Budget, families will need to factor that in.

How much equity you can unlock depends on your age. At 55, the minimum qualifying age, borrowers might release around 25% of their home's value. By age 75 this could rise to 55% or more.

Equity release is far from a silver bullet. Interest rates are higher than standard mortgages, eating into what's left for heirs. Downsizing may be a cheaper way of freeing up funds. Any loan must also be repaid when the property is sold, which reduces the eventual inheritance.

Plans are fully regulated and should include a no-negative equity guarantee, which ensures that loved ones will not inherit debt.

Chambers warned against making hasty moves ahead of Budget speculation that may never actually happen. "Speak to a financial expert to understand equity release and plan properly."

Best personal finance and mortgage deals

Source: Moneyfactscompare.co.uk

Rates correct at 8:00am 5th September 2025

Current Accounts

CURRENT ACCOUNTS WITH CREDIT INTEREST OR REWARD

Provider	Account	AER or Amount Paid
TSB	Spend & Save Plus	£5 pm
Nationwide BS	FlexDirect	5.00% **A**
Kroo Bank	Current Account	2.90%
Santander	Edge Up Current Account	2.50%

Personal Loans

PERSONAL LOANS - BASED ON £10,000 OVER 5 YEARS

Provider	APR	Monthly Repayment	Total Amount Repayable
M&S	5.9%	£192.15	£11,529.00
TSB	5.9%	£192.15	£11,529.00
Santander	5.9%	£192.15	£11,529.00
Tesco Bank	6.2%	£193.47	£11,608.20

Credit Cards

PURCHASE CREDIT CARDS

Provider	Product Name	0% Period	APR
TSB	Platinum Purchase Card MC	25 mths	24.9%
Barclaycard	Platinum 21 BT & 24 Purch Visa	24 mths	24.9%
M&S Bank	Purchase Plus Offer Mastercard	24 mths	24.9%
Lloyds Bank	Platinum 0% Purch & BT CC Visa	23 mths	24.9%

Mortgages

SHORT TERM FIXED RATES

Provider	Initial Rate	Period	Max LTV	Fee	Redemption Charge
first direct	3.78%	for 2 years	60%	£490	1st 2 yrs
first direct	4.32%	for 2 years	90%	£490	1st 2 yrs
first direct	3.93%	for 3 years	60%	£490	1st 3 yrs
West Brom BS	4.55%	to 31.12.28	90%	-	To 31.12.28

Moneyfacts compare.co.uk

A = Introductory rate for a limited period.

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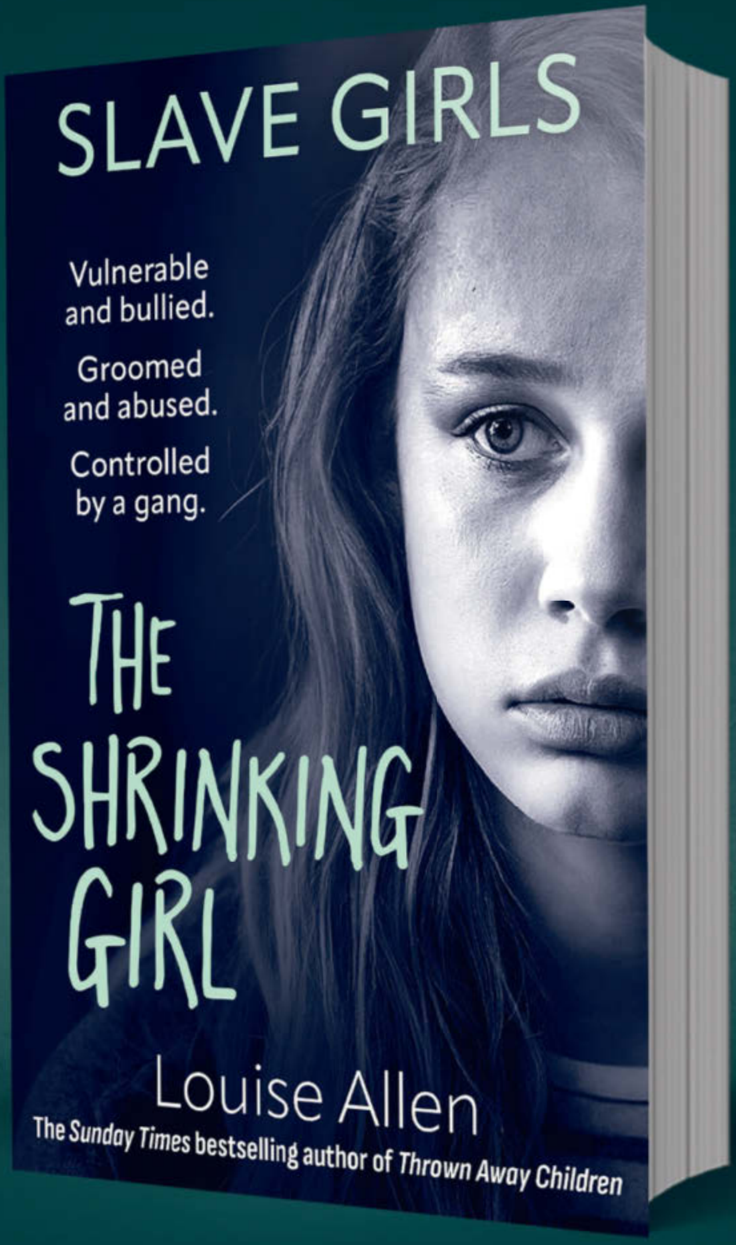
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ON THIS DAY WITH SHAUN WALLACE

September 7, 1940

THE GERMAN Luftwaffe launched a major aerial attack on London, marking the beginning of the Blitz. Lasting eight months, it would damage some of London's iconic landmarks – like the Tower of London, Buckingham Palace and Westminster – and erase some residential areas from the map.

The attacks were authorised by Hitler after Britain carried out a nighttime air raid on Berlin. The offensive was named after the German word blitzkrieg ("lightning war").

Other cities that suffered significantly included Liverpool, Birmingham, Sheffield, Manchester, Coventry, Southampton, Bristol, Cardiff, Portsmouth and Plymouth.

Approximately 30,000 civilians in London were killed and more than a million houses destroyed or damaged. Across Britain the total death toll reached 43,000.

The initial raid targeted the London docks and the East End, causing widespread fires and significant casualties.

The attack, beginning in the late afternoon and involving hundreds of German bombers, continued throughout the night, with a second wave of bombers guided by the fires. About 300 bombers attacked the city for an hour and a half. The entire docklands area was ablaze as hundreds of fires lit up the sky. Once darkness fell the fires could be seen more than 10 miles away.

Civil defence teams worked through the night to take people out of the range of fire and find them temporary shelter and food.

In the air, a series of ferocious dogfights developed as the German aircraft flew up the Thames Estuary. The Air Ministry said at least 15 enemy aircraft crashed into the estuary, and in all 88 German aircraft were shot down, against 22 RAF planes lost.

The main objectives of the Blitz were to break Britain's morale and pressure the government into surrendering. However, the campaign failed to achieve its strategic goals and instead strengthened British resolve, giving rise to the phrase "Blitz spirit", which is still used to this day.

Also on this day...

1191: Saladin's Muslim army attacks Richard I's Crusaders at Battle of Arsuf
1822: Brazil declares independence from Portugal, ending 322 years of colonial rule
1968: Jimmy Page, Robert Plant and John Bonham make live debut as Led Zeppelin

Question: Which rapper was shot multiple times in Las Vegas on this day in 1996, dying from his injuries six days later?
Last week I asked: How old was Henry VI when he became King of England on this day in 1422? The answer is NINE MONTHS.

LETTERS

Write to: The Editor, Sunday Express,
One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5AP
Email: sunday.exletters@express.co.uk
Please include your name, address and daytime telephone number

Government betrayal causes a lack of fight

If you'd asked Britons a few decades ago if they were willing to fight for their country most would've said yes, so it is a sad indictment that now only a third would. Why the disconnect ("Most Britons would refuse to fight for country", August 31)?

People don't know what they would be fighting for, they feel the Government isn't looking after their interests while supporting outsiders coming in.

A rise in far-right politics is also alienating Britons from ethnic backgrounds who may now be questioning whether they are truly embraced here.

All this clearly means that at present British citizens wonder if the values they would be fighting for are those they hold themselves and whether they serve the best interests of the British people.

If they don't, then why should they fight for King and country?

What a shame it has come to this due to the actions of those at the helm as Britain is and always has been worth fighting for.

Diane Silva,
Bournemouth, Dorset

Britons won't put lives on line to save illegals

As this Government has clearly stated that illegal migrants have more rights than the British people and bends over backwards to protect those among us who hate our flags and the British way of life, why would any patriotic Briton put his or her life on the line to protect those who are already abusing the freedoms our forefathers fought and died for?

John Kennedy,
Hornchurch, Essex

Why would anybody want to join military?

Look at the facts of military service. Poor pay, squalid housing and long periods away from loved ones while you risk life and limb on active service.

And what can one expect on retirement? A vastly taxed pension, lack of treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder and sleeping on the streets because the Government and country you served would rather house illegal migrants who have given nothing to this country.

Finally, years after a deployment you are prosecuted for carrying out the orders you were given by your own Government.

Add this to the fact that many young people today arrived as migrants or are the children of migrants and have little or no respect for the UK and it is obvious why there is a problem with recruitment.

Dick Bedford,
Cullompton, Devon

Quote of the week

"I have been clear throughout this process that my priority has, and always will be, protecting my children and the strain I am putting them under through staying in post has become unbearable."

ANGELA RAYNER a announces her resignation as Deputy PM

We are no longer the proud nation of past

It's hardly surprising that two in three adults would not fight for Britain if we came under attack. The Britain we reside in now is a million miles away from the country it was during both world wars.

Yes, myself, along with the majority of people in this country, are still extremely patriotic but successive politicians have allowed the cultural dynamics of this country to change beyond belief.

Just imagine if we were at war and all our fighting age men were called up to serve while young, fit illegal migrants were allowed to roam freely and continue to live the good life. Would the indigenous people of this country be prepared to sacrifice sons, grandsons, mothers and daughters for a better life for illegals?

Julie Foster,
Burnley, Lancashire

Migrants 'detained' in lovely four-star hotels

The Prime Minister said: "We will not reward illegal entry. If you cross the the Channel unlawfully, you will be detained and sent back" ("Councils told: Keep up fight over hotels", August 31).

Well if keeping illegal migrants in four-star hotels with full board, doctors and dentists on hand plus spending money isn't rewarding them, I don't know what is.

Anne Jones,
Stalybridge, Cheshire

My faith in RNLI sinks after its water taxi role

Further to Stephanie Clarke's letter regarding the RNLI ("RNLI crew employers are funding water taxis", August 31), the RNLI used to be my favourite charity, being an ex-matelot and knowing the power of the sea, I never failed to willingly contribute.

However, ever since the RNLI became a free taxi service for illegal migrants it is with a heavy heart that I refuse to contribute until this is stopped. If more people did this it may reconsider.

Terry Martin,
Bordon, Hampshire

Trump following Nazi playbook for dictators

Is it just me or has anyone else noticed the similarity between the current US administration and the Nazi Party of 1930s Germany ("Trump fury after court rules tariffs are 'illegal'", August 31)?

Rewriting history to fit the current narrative, deploying stormtroopers (National Guard) in areas of differing viewpoints, blaming a particular group for all the ills in society – in Germany it was the Jews, in the US it is now Hispanics – trying to control the judiciary and a catalogue of lies and propaganda to rival that of Joseph Goebbels (see Donald Trump's social media posts).

Trump is already talking of illegally taking a third term and suggesting a dictatorship. The man is deranged and it seems the US public cannot see it.

Bill Peake,
Swindon, Wilts

Stop publishing stories about grifter Meghan

I would just like to say how myself and probably other readers are totally fed up with seeing the sickly grin of Meghan Markle ("Look who's back... with lavender latte", August 31). Is there anything that she won't do for publicity?

Alan Weatheritt,
Ashington, Northumberland

TELEPHONE VOTE RESULT

Last week we revealed two in three adults would not fight for Britain if we came under attack, and we asked:
Should Britain bring back National Service?
YES: 91% NO: 9%

JAMES BOND in LIVE AND LET DIE by Ian Fleming

DRAWN BY JOHN McLUSKY

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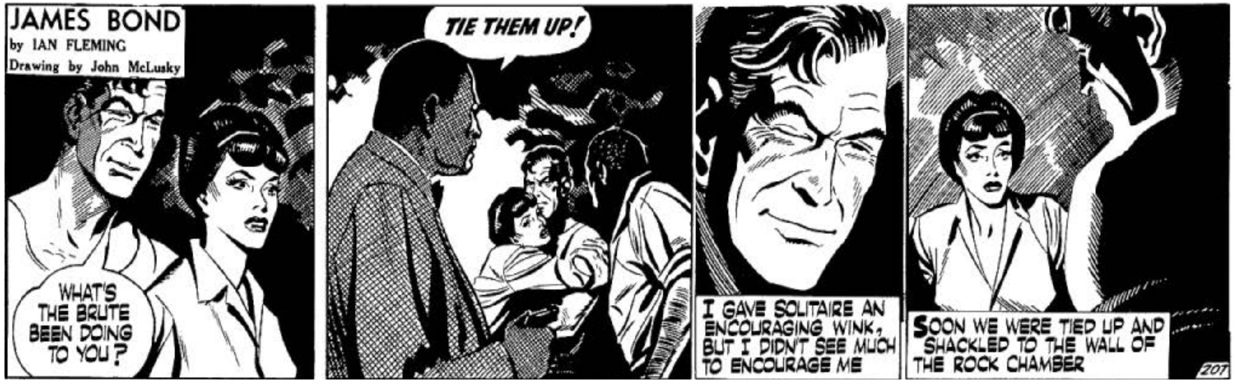
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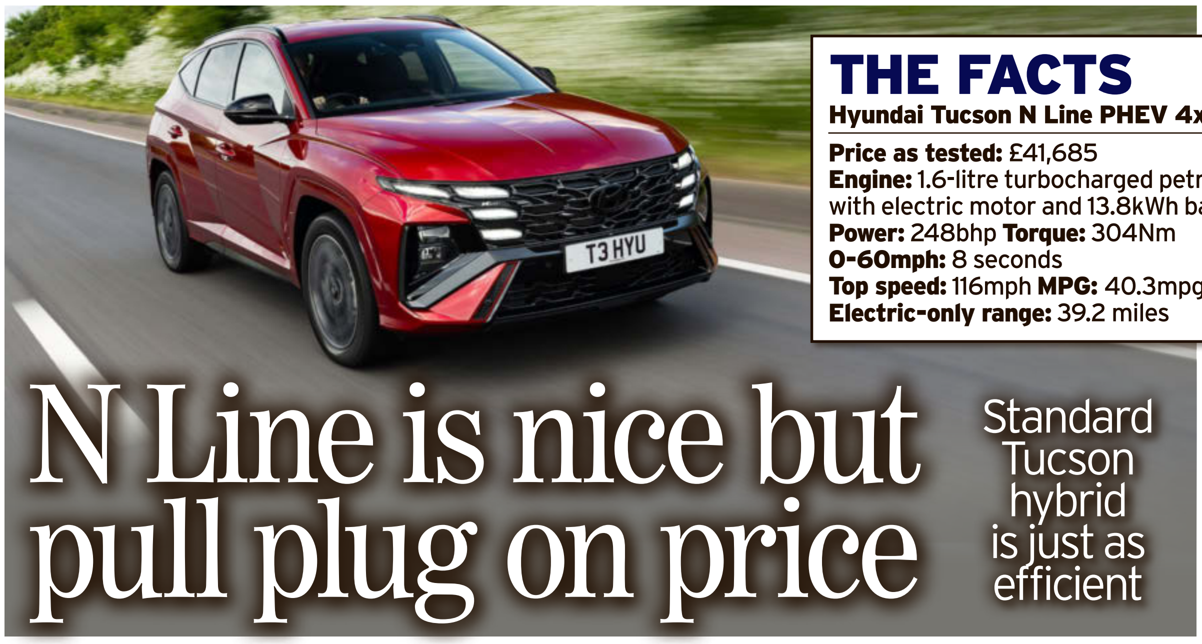
MOTORING

N Line is nice but pull plug on price

Standard Tucson hybrid is just as efficient



THE FACTS

Hyundai Tucson N Line PHEV 4x4

Price as tested: £41,685
Engine: 1.6-litre turbocharged petrol with electric motor and 13.8kWh battery
Power: 248bhp **Torque:** 304Nm
0-60mph: 8 seconds
Top speed: 116mph **MPG:** 40.3mpg
Electric-only range: 39.2 miles

Plug-in hybrid SUVs are gaining popularity through increasing electric-only driving ranges and low operating costs. Now one of Britain's best-selling cars, the Hyundai Tucson, has been given a few updates along with the option of a plug-in hybrid powertrain to give it greener credentials. So, is it worth it? Let's find out.

WHAT'S NEW?

This likeable family wagon has been given a few exterior design changes with a new front grille with larger LED daytime running lights, redesigned front and rear bumpers and some fresh alloy wheels. And the interior has had an extensive modern makeover. You still get the same range of petrol, hybrid and plug-in hybrid powertrains to suit a wide range of buyers.

UNDER THE BONNET?

The plug-in hybrid setup has a 1.6-litre turbocharged petrol engine with an electric motor and 13.8kWh battery. Our test car also has four-wheel drive, with 248bhp and a meaty 304Nm of torque. The car can hit 60mph in eight seconds and the top speed is 116mph. Hyundai claims it will do 39.2 miles on electric power alone, and full charge with a regular 7kW home charger will take just under two hours. This PHEV only emits 29g/km of CO2 and fuel economy is a claimed 40.3mpg.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO DRIVE?

The regular Tucson is one of the best SUVs for driving dynamics, and the PHEV version is just as impressive. Four-wheel drive also means it corners with lots of grip. The steering is precise. In town, the electric motor cuts in reasonably smoothly, and even when the battery runs out of charge, the on-board electric motor ensures you can drive around at slower speeds in EV mode.

It seems to fidget over potholes, but that may be due to our test car's larger alloy wheels. And when you put your foot down, the engine sounds strangled and rather coarse.

HOW DOES IT LOOK?

Its bold lines make it stand out from the crowd of family cars. The N Line trim on our car means it comes with larger diamond-cut alloy wheels, a rear roof spoiler, body-coloured wheel arch extensions, gloss black trim and rear privacy glass. The Tucson also has an aggressive yet sporty look.

AND INSIDE?

The interior has had a heavy makeover. There are two 12.3in touchscreens, slick and easy to operate. The rest of the cabin is well thought out with a large cut-out in the centre console, deep door bins, a glovebox, cup holders and storage under the armrest. Our N Line car gets sportier upgrades such as half leather and Alcantara upholstery, aluminium-effect pedals, red stitching and a sports steering wheel. Space in the back is excellent and the rear bench can recline. The boot space of 558 litres is a lot less than the standard car's 620. But it's still very usable with the 40:20:40 split-folding rear seat lying flat, boosting space to 1,799 litres.

WHAT'S THE SPEC LIKE?

Hyundai offers the Tucson with many trim levels, and lots of standard equipment. The range kicks off with the Advance and includes the two 12.3in displays, dual zone climate control and 17in alloy wheels.

Our N Line test car boasts a heated steering wheel, a powered tailgate, rear sun shades, N Line exterior styling and 19in alloy wheels.

Other variants in the range, such as the Ultimate and N Line S, add extras such as a head-up display, LED headlights and an electric panoramic sunroof.

But with prices kicking off at £39,385 for the entry-level car and rising to £44,385, the Tucson does seem rather dear against competition, with the BYD Seal U starting at £33,315 and rising to £40,015.

VERDICT

It's easy to see why the Tucson is a best seller. It's good-looking, great to drive, spacious and affordable to run. It's very difficult for manufacturers to make cars stand out in this sector, but Hyundai has made a family-friendly SUV engaging and interesting. But we don't think this plug-in hybrid is worth forking out the extra money. The standard hybrid car is just as efficient, more affordable and offers a bigger boot space.

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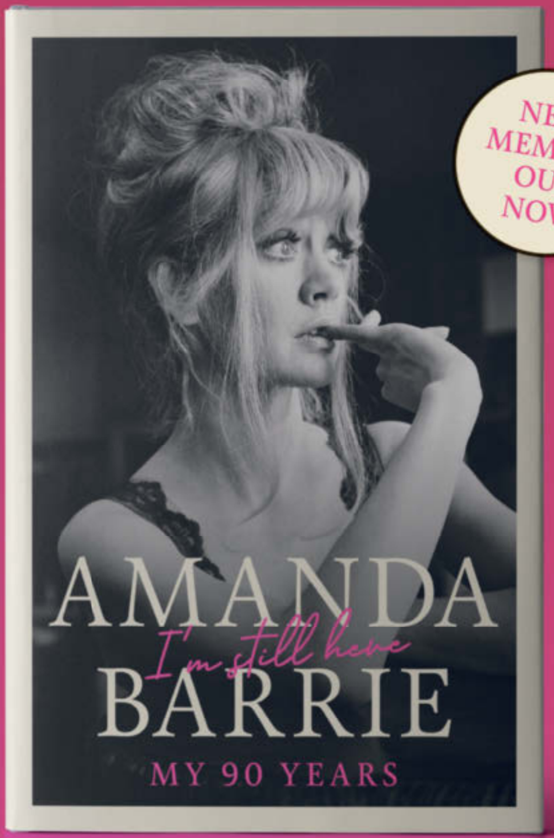
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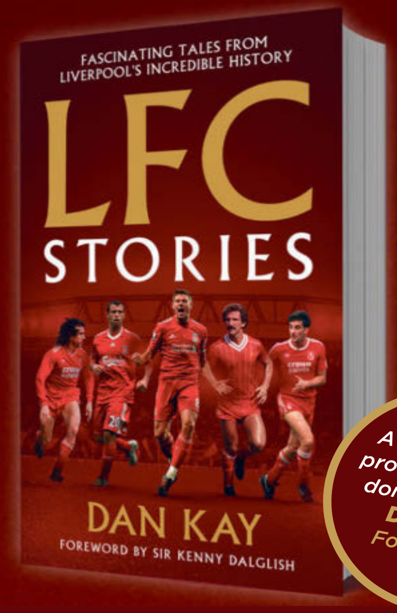
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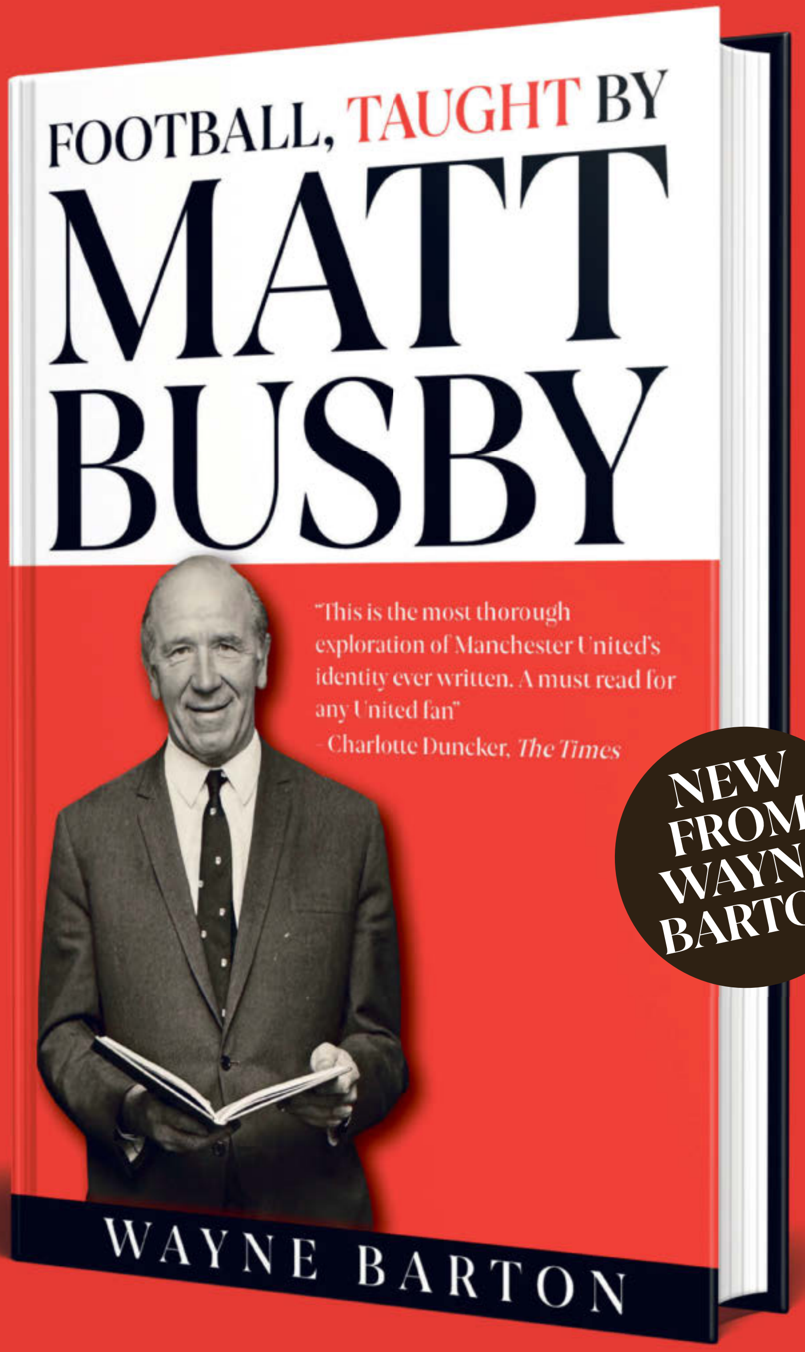
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19	21	23	7	12	■	24	20	9	17	21	8	11
8	■	9	■	9	■	25	■	1	■	24	■	25
11	9	3	9	4	14	■	14	3	21	1	3	14
20	■	14	■	14	■	■	■	14	■	14	■	7

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16 F	17	18	19	20 H	21	22	23	24	25	26

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

For extra letter clues, call:

0907 181 2603*

(Deduct two minutes from Target Time for each extra letter used).

Full solution:
0907 181 2602*

Across only:
0907 181 2600*

Down only:
0907 181 2601*

**Calls cost 80p a minute plus your telephone company's network access charge.*

Alternatively, for six extra letter clues direct to your mobile, text:
SXALPHA to **64343**

Texts cost £1 plus your standard network rate.

SP: Spoke – 0333 202 3390

Last Sunday's solution
ACROSS: Iconic, Angora, Coterie, Undue, Grog, Bairn, Loser, Defy (clue), Tarot, Thicket, Revolt, Rigour.
DOWN: Ribcage, Store, Jogtrot, Gravy, Fibre, Hostile, Megahertz, Enquiry, Pixie, Dowdy, Desktop, Waxen, Mystery.

Alphapuzzle® ©2025 Acorn Editorial Ltd. All words appear in Chambers Dictionary

THE ULTRA ALPHAPUZZLE®

Here's the Ultra Alphapuzzle® – Sunday's extra tough version of Britain's favourite wordpower challenge. Each grid number represents a different letter. All 26 letters are used.
Target time: 30 minutes **Solution next Sunday.**

22	■	4	■	4	■	■	■	12	■	6	■	11
16	20	20	16	12	1	■	13	22	6	17	16	21
26	■	20	■	22	■	12	■	23	■	23	■	6
2	23	22	1	6	12	23	■	19	23	22	26	1
6	■	23	■	13	■	21	■	8	■	25	■	25
1	4	21	14	■	16	10	11	4	15	■	■	■
16	■	1	■	12	■	11	■	22	■	20	■	11
■	■	■	18	23	21	16	25	■	12	23	22	21
15	■	26	■	11	■	22	■	8	■	15	■	3
23	21	6	23	21	■	23	5	6	13	6	26	16
8	■	1	■	26	■	22	■	24	■	4	■	4
8	15	4	7	16	22	■	9	23	24	24	16	22
25	■	22	■	15	■	■	■	1	■	16	■	13

1	2	3	4	5 X	6	7	8	9	10	11 U	12	13
14 K	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

For up to six extra clue letters call:

0907 181 2607*

(Deduct two minutes from Target Time for each extra letter used).

Full solution:
0907 181 2611*

Across only:
0907 181 2609*

Down only:
0907 181 2610*

**Calls cost 80p a minute plus your telephone company's network access charge.*

Alternatively, for six extra clues direct to your mobile, text:
SXALPHAU to **64343**

Texts cost £1 plus your standard network rate.

Last Sunday's solution
ACROSS: Sawn, Quivered, Forbear, Ledge, Whelk, Ordeal, Reside, Amoeba, Enigma, Shard, Exude, Seizing, Monotony, Lion.
DOWN: Software, Germ, Worse, Sunburn, Jerked, Great, Uproot, Damson, Valid, Misfit, Radiate, Alibi, Diet, Cardigan.

THINKING SPACE

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ULTIMATE ALPHABEATER

Can you crack the super-tough Ultimate Alphabeater? Each grid number represents a letter – or black square. As in Alphapuzzle, every letter of the alphabet is used. But you have to complete the grid too! Use the given letters and black squares below the main grid to start. Alphabeater is 'rotationally symmetrical' – in other words it looks exactly the same if you turn the page upside down. Solution next Sunday.

A **B**	14	5	31	33	34	39	3	26	20	14	16	15	38
~~**C**~~ **D**	6	34	15	18	32	33	31	40	31	36	30	34	5
E **F**	23	14	38	2	36	6	40	12	29	34	15	9	1
G ~~**H**~~	32	25	26	23	17	34	35	31	27	11	18	11	36
I **J**	30	28	5	18	36	12	20	40	12	19	23	6	4
K **L**	13	39	16	21	37	27	15	10	9	18	2	34	19
M **N**	11	26	4	34	21	38	36	31	18	40	12	29	38
O **P**	36	1	38	5	39	22	17	35	4	28	37	29	7
Q **R**	20	9	37	22	4	25	32	15	38	33	11	36	34
S **T**	24	11	31	34	30	34	36	30	16	4	12	13	39
U **V**	11	12	32	38	17	6	8	16	19	18	3	18	17
W **X**	31	40	30	5	34	14	31	19	37	2	20	1	26
Y **Z**	14	6	29	36	23	4	14	9	10	25	38	8	28

1 C	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13 H	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29 ■	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40

Target time: 46 minutes
Stuck getting started?
Try one of our helplines *Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge.

Full solution:
0907 181 2598
Across only:
0907 181 2596
Down only:
0907 181 2597

Last Sunday's Solution:
Black squares: 2, 3, 7, 10, 11, 16, 17, 22, 23, 26, 29, 33, 34, 38.
Across: Tennis, Player, Annoys, Swiftly, Flame, Corgi, Ninth, Beatify, Unclip, Nausea, Gloved.
Down: Qualify, Brink, Tank, Aquarium, Hectic, Nosy, Zag, Spray, Spy, Judo, Fixing, Gyration, Bled, Gravy, Whimper.

For up to six extra letters call 0907 181 2599 (Deduct five minutes from Target Time for each extra letter heard). Callers will also hear two black squares clues free of any Target Time penalty. *Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390

Alternatively, for six extra letter clues direct to your mobile, text **SXBEAT** to **64343.** Texts cost £1 plus your standard network rate. Reduce Target Time by five minutes for each extra letter

● *Puzzle phone and text services SP: Spoke, London W1B 2AG* *SP: Spoke – Helpline 0333 202 3390

BRAIN TEASERS

1) Four friends are checking their horoscopes, but who is which sign? Irene's isn't an animal. Karen isn't the one who is Gemini or Virgo. Laura's is Leo. Jill isn't the one who is Pisces or Virgo.

2) Which two words meaning 'away' and 'correct' combine to make one meaning 'complete'?

3) Which football arenas are concealed in the following anagrams?
a) Coward Roar
b) Concave Target
c) Military Debuts

4) I have just bought the box set of all eighty-four thirty-six-minute episodes of Cats Wearing Hats. If I start it at 7pm on Friday and watch it non-stop, when will it finish?

ANSWERS: 1) Irene is Virgo, Jill is Gemini, Karen is Pisces and Laura is Leo 2) Out-right 3) a) Carrow Road, b) Craven Cottage, c) Liberty Stadium 4) 9:24 pm on Sunday.

SUDOKU

Fill the small squares so that every column, every row, and every 3x3 square includes all of the digits from 1 to 9

7			5		2		1	
	8			9		6		3
1				3			5	
		6			3			8
	3		4	7	9			
5		7	8			3		
	7			2		5		1
6		8					4	
			9		7			6

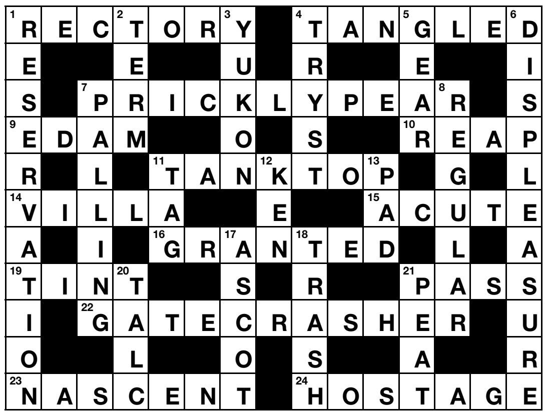
Level: Gentle
Target: 16 minutes
For extra clues call
0901 322 5600
(Calls cost 77p per call from a BT landline plus network extras, other networks and mobiles may vary)
For today's full solution call
0907 181 2606
(Calls cost 77p per minute from BT landlines plus network extras, other networks and mobiles may vary).

LAST SUNDAY'S SOLUTION

7	1	5	2	4	9	6	3	8
8	9	2	3	5	6	7	1	4
6	4	3	8	1	7	2	9	5
1	2	4	7	3	8	9	5	6
5	3	8	6	9	1	4	7	2
9	6	7	4	2	5	1	8	3
2	7	9	5	6	3	8	4	1
3	8	6	1	7	4	5	2	9
4	5	1	9	8	2	3	6	7

THE SKELETON CROSSWORD

Last week's solution

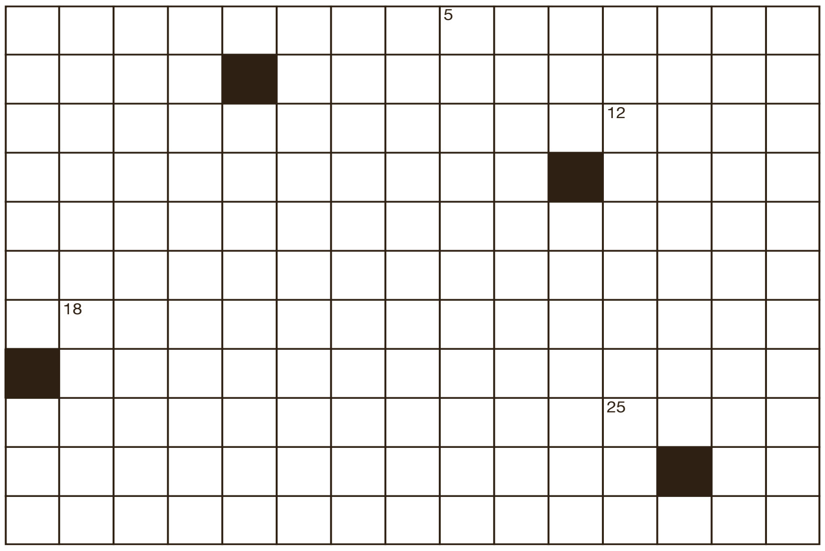


WINNERS: General Knowledge Crossword, 24 August: £250: K Perriss, Bishop Aukland. £50 Mystery Word, 24 August: V Stannard, Worcestershire.

WINNERS: Please allow 30 days to receive your prize.

THINKING SPACE

In the skeleton crossword, the black squares and clue numbers have to be filled in as well as the words. Four black squares and four clue numbers have been inserted to give you a start. The black squares form a symmetrical pattern; the top half matches the bottom, and the two sides correspond. You can fill in 12 more squares at once to correspond with those given.



NAME:

ADDRESS:

POSTCODE:

THE £250 GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD CAN BE FOUND INSIDE S MAGAZINE

ACROSS

1 Wales is one of a slew
5 Poorly spoken hunter under the table
9 A bookworm pulls back
10 Waste time replacing tungsten sample
12 Absorbed, right? Right
13 Steal shell from very accurate shooter
14 Thanks given for a gift
16 Plague remedy second taken
17 Bloomer trouble kept returning
20 Shooter about to earn a gold piece
23 Star with face of thunder in shock
24 Intelligent Omani leads dim American type
25 Bread careless beginner burned remains
26 Housework activity that decreases
27 Playwright ogress sides with carried on

DOWN

2 Current twice as hopeless (Hyphenated)
3 Gear set perhaps reversed (Hyphenated)
4 Dispute about dividing change
6 Officers place people in lodgings
7 Solitary revolutionary holding radical sign up
8 Tree snake bent shedding its skin
11 A bird box is on the line
13 Blue slacks and denim tops
15 Rubbish that hothead discarded
18 Player initially athletic and capable over the hill
19 An indolent trio wearing red
21 Lizard from Greece oddly climbing up to scratch
22 Some missives sent in Germany

MYSTERY WORD – WIN £50

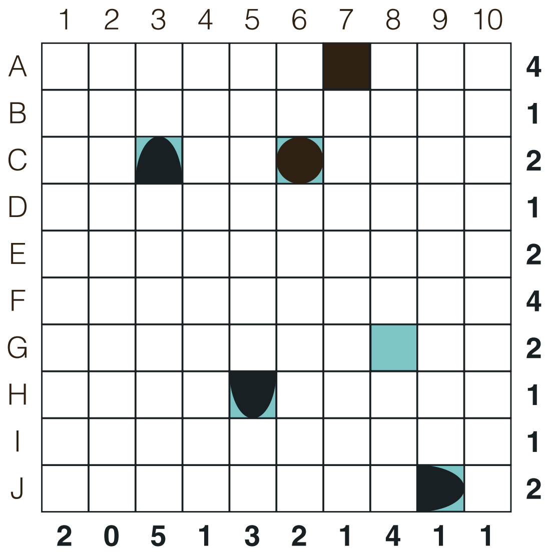
For a chance to win £50 give the correct answer to **26 Across**. Call 0901 322 5301 leaving your name and address. *Calls cost 75p plus your telephone company's network access charge. Alternatively complete the grid and send to Skeleton Mystery Word, September 7, PO Box 8694, Derby DE1 9TW. Competition closes September 11, 2025 at 23:59pm. An extra day is given for postal entries during bank holidays. The winner will be selected from all correct entries received after the closing date. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390.

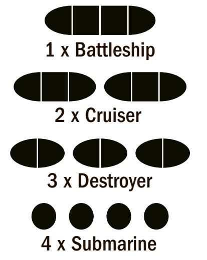
PUB QUIZ

1 Played by Diana Rigg in a 1969 film, Tracy di Vicenzo is the only person to marry which fictional character?
2 In the folk tale Ali Baba And The Forty Thieves, which two-word magical phrase opens the mouth of the treasure cave?
3 Which English city is served by John Lennon Airport?
4 Constructed between 1859 and 1869, which artificial waterway connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea?
5 Also called Poulet Reine Elizabeth, which dish was created by Rosemary Hume and Constance Spry in honour of a 1953 event?
6 The cooking reality series Hell's Kitchen was created by and starred which celebrity chef?
7 Which 2008 animated film, featuring the voices of Ben Burtt and Sigourney Weaver, follows a solitary robot on a mission to clean up Earth?
8 Felipe VI, the current king of Spain, is a member of which royal house?
9 Paris Saint-Germain football club play their home matches at which stadium?
10 What type of deciduous tree of the genus Ulmus is vulnerable to a disease caused by a microfungus and distributed by bark beetles?

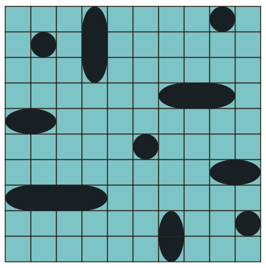
ANSWERS: 1 James Bond, 2 Open Sesame, 3 Liverpool, 4 Suez Canal, 5 Coronation chicken, 6 Gordon Ramsay, 7 WALL-E, 8 Bourbon, 9 Parc des Princes, 10 Elm.
THEME: Streets

BATTLESHIPS





LAST SUNDAY'S SOLUTION



FIND where the fleet of ships shown is hidden in the grid. The numbers to the right of and below the grid indicate how many of the squares in that row are filled in with ships or parts of ships. The ships do not touch each other, even diagonally. Some squares have been filled in to start you off.

THE SUNDAY CRUSADER AND HIS SQUIRE – WIN £100

The Crusader's clues

ACROSS

1 Tom Cruise has premieres to go to (5)
4 Something yellow behind red parts turned brownish-purple (9)
9 They might have takeout food (7,8)
10 Wild orchid with sap gushing (9)
11 When metal meets commercial rock music (5)
12 Young-at-heart developer way in front walked unhurriedly (7)
13 Weakening deity given workaround (7)
15 Dope going round inlet a hundred disregard (7)
18 Electricity on occasion stored in charger (drained charger) (7)
20 Extremely pleasant, but not entirely sound (5)
22 Yearn for the mountains? It's lies! (9)
24 One common courtesy is offensive (15)
25 Cut past monarch internally agitated (9)
26 Exclusive group books back row (3-2)

DOWN

1 Pay for fellow requesting tip (5)
2 Weight problem upset people (7)
3 Do this early for a change (9)
4 Get owned having held back in a city (7)
5 Part of town controlled by a revolutionary (7)
6 Those behind raised standards (5)
7 A sweet preserve lithium-free (7)
8 Permit with green design someone carried (9)
12 Miniature without many moulded parts (9)
14 Maybe renters take place not all bad (9)
16 Something sweet horse twisted hurt (7)
17 Thanks to blokes, Mexican eats (7)
18 Medusa's made up, it's thought (7)
19 Shipping route almost cut to as a stopgap? (7)
21 Funny comedies, finally, from Universal (5)
23 Authorisation to speak the truth (3-2)

For your chance to WIN £100 read down the letters in the highlighted squares to reveal the mystery word.

TO ENTER CALL: 0904 161 3700

(Calls cost £1.50 plus your telephone company's network access charge) and leave your answer and details, or text DXCRUS followed by a space, your answer, name and address details to 88833 (Texts cost £1.50 plus your standard network rate) or send your grid containing the answer in the shaded squares to: Sunday Express Prize Crossword, September 7, PO Box 8694, Derby DE1 9TW. Competition closes September 13, 2025 at 23:59pm. An extra day is given for postal entries during bank holidays.

NAME:

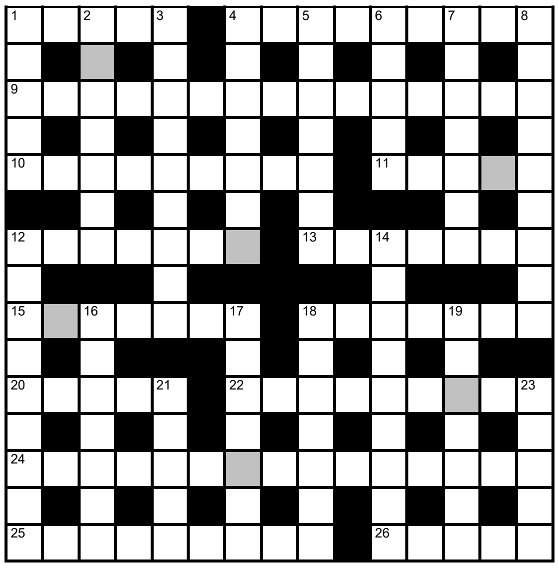
ADDRESS:

POSTCODE:

● *One weekly winner will be the first random correct entry drawn from all entry routes after the closing date. Competition runs Sunday to Saturday. The Editor's decision is final.*

SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390.

Cryptic clues from our knight, and quick clues from his squire, lead to the same answers in the Crusader's Sunday joust



The Squire's clues

ACROSS

1 Hear (5)
4 Yellow-flowered wildflower (9)
9 Coin-operated dispensers (7,8)
10 Rapturous (9)
11 Gain points (5)
12 Ambled (7)
13 Wearing away (7)
15 Fail (to) (7)
18 Plaintiff (7)
20 ___ boom (5)
22 Expresses oneself wrongly (9)
24 Disparaging (15)
25 Worked out (9)
26 Run-in (3-2)

DOWN

1 Veil (5)
2 Friendly Islands natives (7)
3 Coiffure (9)
4 Capital of Iraq (7)
5 Portion (7)
6 Prevailing spirit (5)
7 Italian dessert (7)
8 ___ pigeon (9)
12 Minute (9)
14 Residents (9)
16 Culinary blend of chocolate and cream (7)
17 Filled Mexican dough cakes (7)
18 Taken on (7)
19 Substance used to stop leaks (7)
21 Comedian (5)
23 Authority (3-2)

LAST SUNDAY'S SOLUTION: Across: 1 Argue, 4 Translate, 9 Chemical element, 10 Tears into, 11 Llama, 12 Steroid, 13 Everest, 15 Riposte, 18 Floored, 20 Trout, 22 Switching, 24 Get someone's goat, 25 Merchants, 26 Susan. Down: 1 Ascot, 2 Goes ape, 3 Emissions, 4 Trained, 5 Anemone, 6 Swell, 7 Average, 8 Extracted, 12 Stratagem, 14 Exorcists, 16 Plotter, 17 Eastern, 18 Friends, 19 Ruinous, 21 Tooth, 23 Get on.
Prize word: Marlin

*SP: Spoke – Helpline 0333 202 3390

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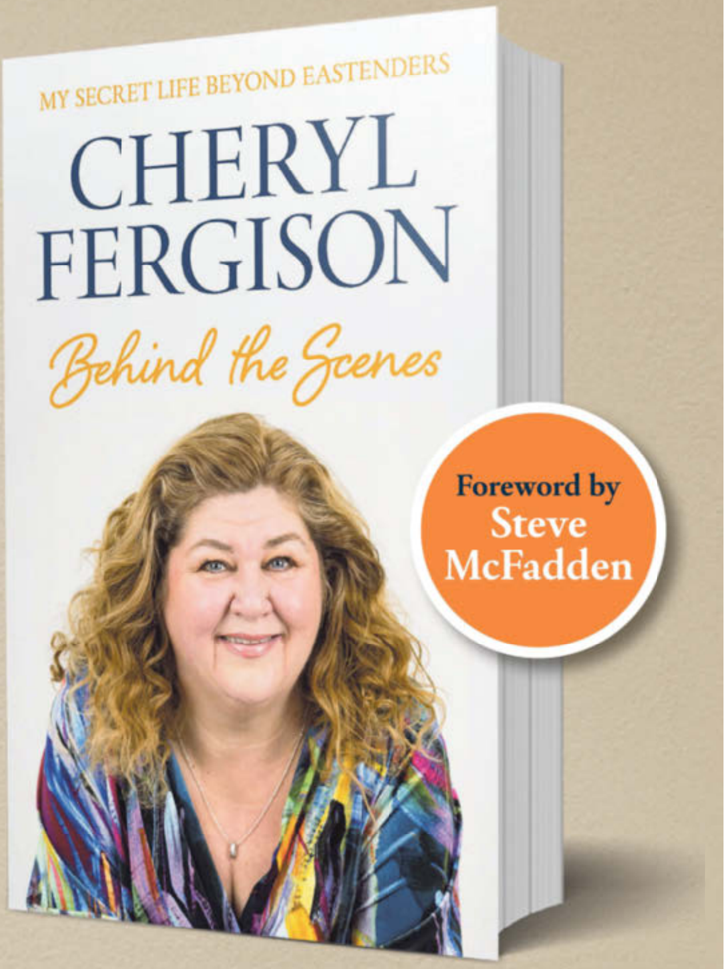
MY SECRET LIFE BEYOND EASTENDERS



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- ✓ Made from: Metal, stainless steel, tempered glass
- ✓ Dimensions: H32 x W25.5 x D27.5cm

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Alongside its purification benefits, the unit features a gentle night light. Its soft illumination brings a warm and calming atmosphere, ideal for creating comfort in bedrooms, nurseries or home offices. This thoughtful design allows it to serve two purposes in one, blending seamlessly into your daily routine while providing both health and wellbeing benefits.

Compact, reliable and simple to use, the Night Light Air Purifier offers peace of mind by helping to make the air in your home cleaner and your surroundings more relaxing. It's a practical way to support a fresher and more enjoyable atmosphere where you need it most.

yimbly.com/Offer96 Quote **Offer96** Offer ends 30th September

UK Customer Service 0161 444 9879 | **Now Open 7 Days a Week**

Offers subject to availability. Terms and Conditions apply. Free Delivery over £50. Customer Service operates 9.00am - 5.00pm, Monday - Friday, and 9.00am - 1.00pm, Saturday and Sunday, except on Bank Holidays. Calls are charged at your standard network rate. Visit yimbly.com/terms for full details, including Delivery & Returns information. For queries, contact support@yimbly.com.

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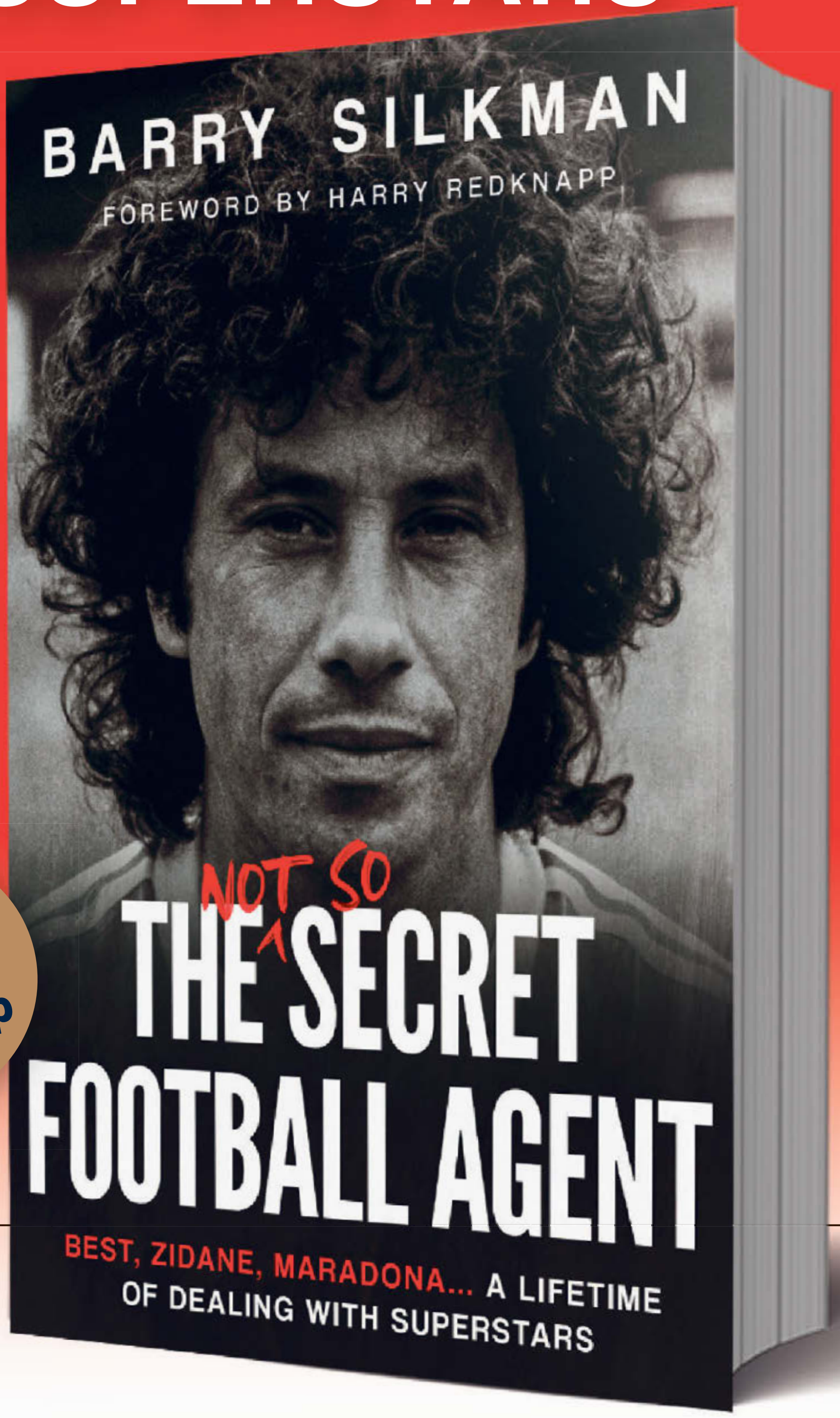
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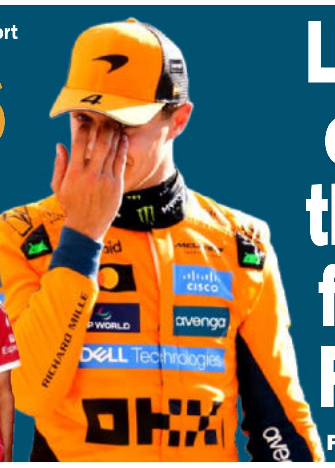
SOLANO: ISAK HAS RUINED HIS TOON LEGACY
PULLOUT: PAGE 7



Lando's one in the eye for pal Piastri
F1: PULLOUT P8

Can Rehan be man to provide England sparkle?
CRICKET: PULLOUT P9

SWEET WIN IS TOP FOR ROSES
RUGBY UNION: PULLOUT P10

WORLD CUP QUALIFYING
ENGLAND 2 0 ANDORRA
Villa Park

TOP DEC: Arsenal man Declan Rice after his goal

AND OF HOPE & GORY!

Three Lions stroll but fail to impress boss

By **John Cross**

THOMAS TUCHEL admitted England should have scored more goals after the fans voted with their feet at Villa Park.

The stadium was half-empty at the final whistle as England laboured to a dull victory over minnows Andorra.

Three Lions boss Tuchel said several of his players were wasteful in front of goal.

Tuchel said: "It's a very different crowd to a Premier League crowd.

"I think the energy was right, the quality was there and we should've scored more. After the first goal we had 10 or 15 minutes with too many ball losses and lost our focus and concentration but the second half, we found it again and should have scored more.

"Maybe Ebz [Eberechi Eze] didn't have his best day in the number 10, the last pass from Noni Madueke wasn't clinical enough and Marcus Rashford had good moments but couldn't finish them."

REPORT AND VERDICT: SEE SPORT PULLOUT P1-5

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SUNDAY EXPRESS Sport
TUCH AND GO!
Three Lions cruise as Thomas powers along
ENGLAND 2 ANDORRA 0 REPORT & VERDICT: PAGES 2-5

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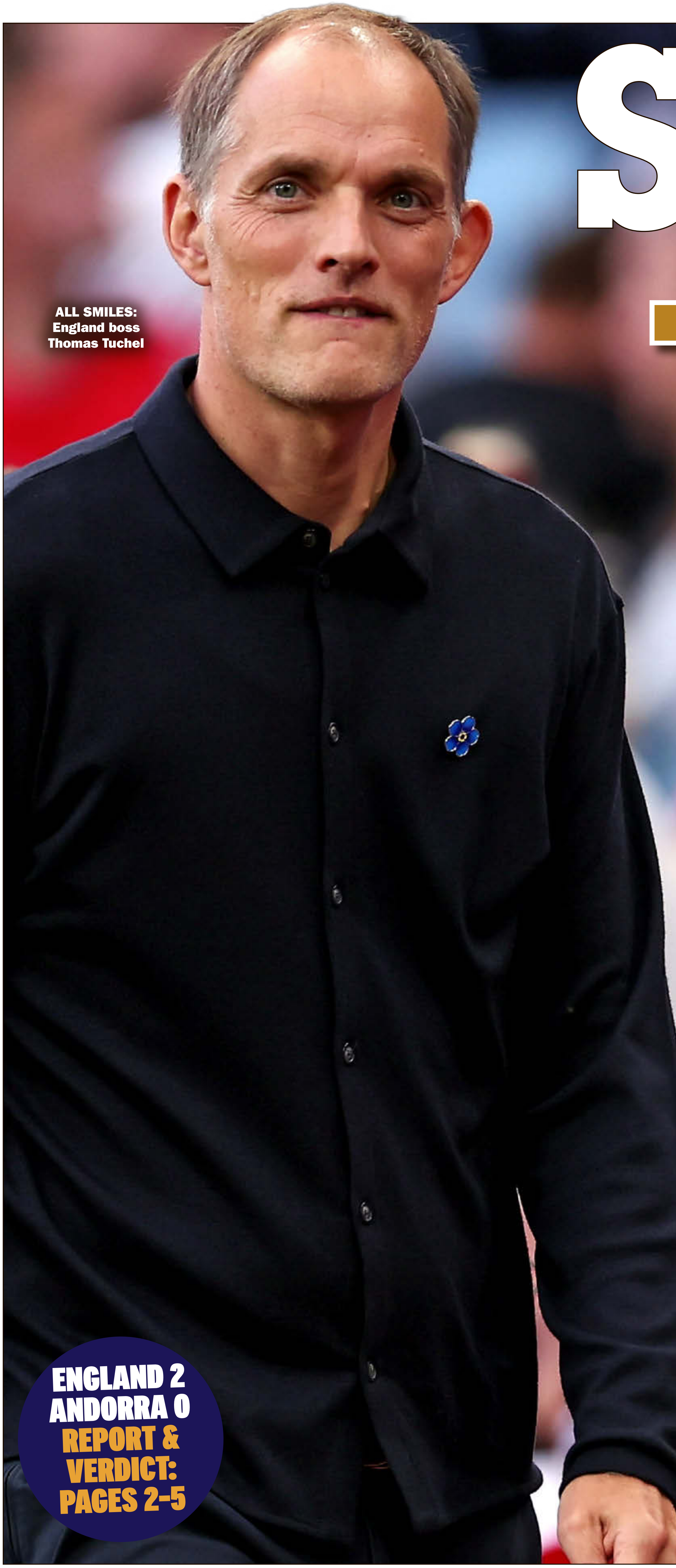
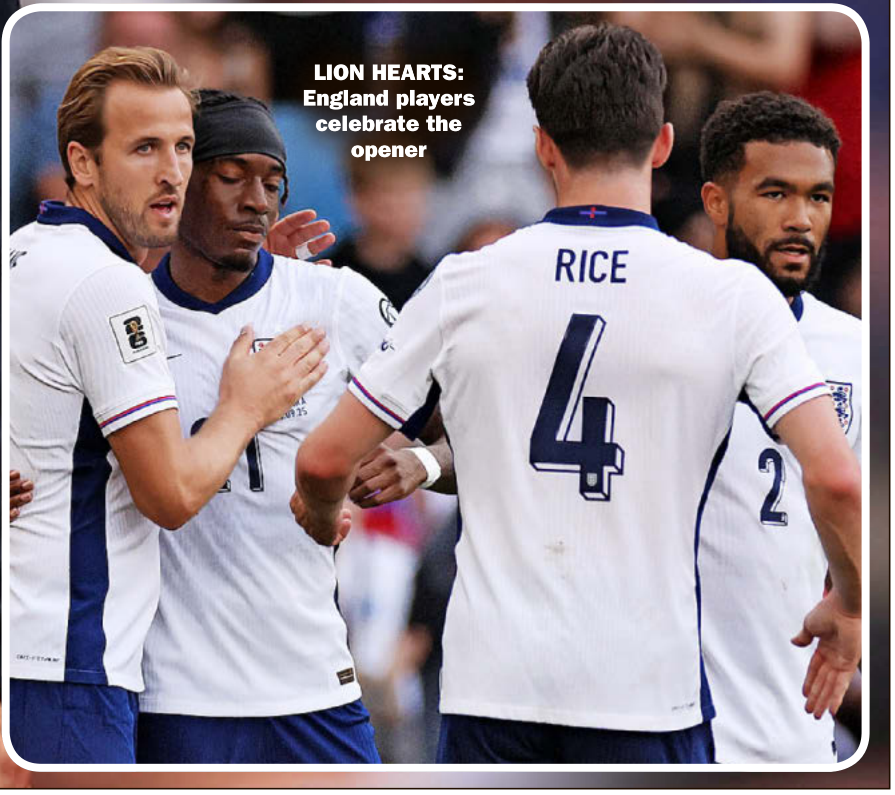
TUCH AND GO!

Three Lions cruise as Thomas powers along



ALL SMILES: England boss Thomas Tuchel



LION HEARTS: England players celebrate the opener

ENGLAND 2
ANDORRA 0
REPORT & VERDICT: PAGES 2-5

FINALLY: Declan Rice heads home England's second goal at the far post

Three Lions' Cold comfort

RICE SPARES THE BLUSHES

ENGLAND...2
C Garcia 25 og, Rice 67

ANDORRA...0

From **John Cross** at **Villa Park**

THE Villa Park crowd probably wished they had gone to see Coldplay at Wembley instead.

This was not a great advert for international football and even one of Chris Martin's songs might have got the pulses racing faster.

Ultimately, England got the job done against an Andorra team that is ranked 174th in the world – but it felt more like a training session than a World Cup qualifier.

It was only moved to the Midlands because Coldplay had already booked a string of sell-out nights at Wembley and this felt like such a familiar England storyline.

They were sluggish, lacked intensity and were completely uninspiring.

Thomas Tuchel could really do with some momentum – but England struggled to get out of first gear.

England had to rely on an own goal to break the deadlock and only managed one of their own thanks to Declan Rice's second-half header. There were some positives, as Nottingham Forest midfielder Elliot Anderson was bright and impressive on his debut, moving the ball and looking at home in international football.

> 'Struggled to get out of first gear'

England boss Tuchel is desperately looking for a new No.6 to anchor his midfield and release the shackles from Rice, and Anderson put on a good audition.

But England looked too much like the team that laboured against Andorra in the reverse fixture back in June, when only Harry Kane's solitary goal separated the teams.

Not even the ever-reliable Kane could get on the scoresheet this time.

It was lacklustre and dull. It was also a long way from instilling the sort of buzz they will need to go to Serbia on Tuesday when they will face arguably the toughest fixture in Group K.

Let's be honest, they are halfway to being qualified and one thing England do well is qualifying campaigns.

But if they wanted to get the nation believing in them again ahead of next year's World Cup, this was not the goal feast they needed.

Tuchel actually wheeled out the old cliche in his programme notes. "There are no easy games at international level any more."

Come on, we cannot fall for that one. To prove the point, Andorra only managed four touches in England's penalty box.

It is down to England to break them down and they made hard work of it back in June – and it was the same story again this time.

Tuchel cut a frustrated, slightly worried figure as he sat on top of a drinks cooler box on the touchline as England were rather sluggish and did not move the ball nearly quick enough.

Anderson looked lively as he tried to get England moving in midfield while Noni Madueke was sharp down the right.

But these games are always about just how early you can get the first goal.

Andorra came to defend, strung five across the back and tried to soak it all up. They are whipping boys resigned to their fate.

The much-needed breakthrough came after 25 minutes. Madueke floated a cross from the right, Andorra defender Christian Garcia went up to head the ball but only succeeded in diverting the ball into his own net.

That should have been the moment the floodgates

MATCH RATINGS

JORDAN PICKFORD

Largely a spectator but at least he was kept busy with a couple of suspect back passes.

6

REECE JAMES

Undoubtedly Tuchel's first-choice right-back and his cross for Declan Rice's goal showed why.

7

MARC GUEHI

Needed an afternoon off after his turbulent week. Was able to put his feet up against toothless front line.

6

DAN BURN

Looked very comfortable and is clearly one of Tuchel's favourites. Solid display.

6

MYLES LEWIS-SKELLY

Has not been starting for Arsenal and did not really seize his chance for England in a quiet display.

6

ELLIOT ANDERSON

England's best player. Highly-impressive debut in a good audition for the No.6 role.

8

DECLAN RICE

Scored with a nicely taken header to lift the mood in the second half and make sure of the three points.

7

EBERECHI EZE

A bit ponderous and wasted a couple of big chances. Underwhelming display.

6

NONI MADUEKE

The Arsenal man was lively down the right. He is definitely nailing down a World Cup place.

7

MARCUS RASHFORD

Started well but faded away. Missed a huge chance in the second half and remains an enigma.

6

HARRY KANE

He must have thought he would get some goals – but was largely frustrated by England's slow play.

6

SUBSTITUTES: Gordon (Rashford 68th) 6, Livramento (James 68th) 6, Rogers (Rice 68th) 6, Konsa (Guehi 76th) 6, Gibbs-White (Eze 78th) 6.

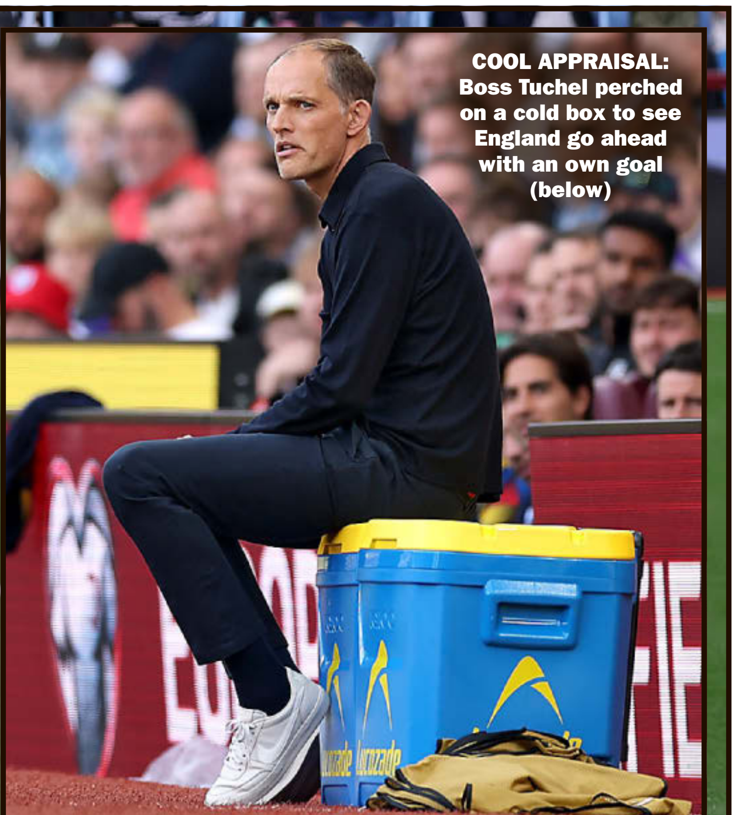
ANDORRA: Alvarez 7; Borra 6, Llovera 6, C Garcia 5, Olivera 6, San Nicolas 6; Rodrigo 5, M Vales 5, Babot 5, Cervos 5; Fernandez 5.

SUBSTITUTES: Guillen (Vales 59th) 6, Lopez (Fernandez 59th) 6, Dacu (Rodrigo 81st) 6, Rubio (Cervos 90th) 6, Rebes (Babot 90th) 6.

RATINGS BY JOHN CROSS

QUALIFYING GROUP K

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
England	4	4	0	0	8	0	8	12
Serbia	3	2	1	0	4	0	4	7
Albania	4	1	2	1	4	3	1	5
Latvia	4	1	1	2	2	5	-3	4
Andorra	5	0	0	5	0	10	-10	0



COOL APPRAISAL: Boss Tuchel perched on a cold box to see England go ahead with an own goal (below)

laboured win is for boss Tuchel

BUT IT'S ALL TOO DULL

opened. But England were so wasteful in front of goal.

Eberechi Eze saw his shot pushed away by Andorra keeper Iker Alvarez and Marcus Rashford had a huge chance from the rebound but steered his shot wide.

Kane set up Anderson but he failed to take advantage and Alvarez made another smart save. Rashford cut the ball back for Eze but the Arsenal new boy skied over. Finally, England got a second. Tuchel loves Reece James from their time together at Chelsea. And James' crossing can be superb. This time, he whipped one over from the right, Rice rose at the back post and his towering header flew in.

But the game faded away and, embarrassingly, Villa Park was half-empty at the final whistle. The early leavers were probably making a dash for Wembley for better entertainment.

MATCH FACTS

England		Andorra
7	Shots on Target	0
3	Shots off Target	2
8	Corners	0
10	Fouls	8
83%	Possession	17%
790	Total Passes	163

BRAVE FACE: Noni Madueke was smiling despite a frustrating evening at Villa Park

COVETED: Marc Guehi

CITY WILL TAKE ON GUEHI'S SUITORS

EXCLUSIVE by **Michael Ham**

MANCHESTER CITY will battle Liverpool and the rest of Europe's elite for Marc Guehi in the January transfer window.

City's strong interest in the Crystal Palace and England centre-back was revealed in the *Sunday Express* two weeks ago.

But The Etihad stance was that they would only make their move in the last transfer window if central defenders Manuel Akanji and Nathan Ake left the club.

Eventually, only Akanji departed – joining Inter Milan on loan, with the Italian club having an option to make the move permanent for £13million.

City insiders also claim there was a belief Guehi, 25, would not leave Selhurst Park before the window closed and were proved right when Palace chairman Steve Parish pulled the plug on a £35m move to Liverpool.

The Premier League champions believe they are still favourites to win the battle for Guehi and, like City, hope Palace will accept a cut-price fee in January – with the coveted defender becoming a free agent in the summer.

But the competition for Liverpool is hotting up – and not just from City boss Pep Guardiola.

European heavyweights Real Madrid, Barcelona and Bayern Munich are also being linked with the England defender – hardly surprising given his contract situation.

INTEREST: Guardiola

TOP GUN: Mitrovic (left) speaks to the press

Saudi switch net gain for Mitrovic

By **Jason Mellor**

SERBIA striker Aleksandar Mitrovic is out to prove that his only currency is goals.

The former Fulham hitman was labelled a mercenary by fans after quitting the Londoners to quadruple his pay with a £400,000-a-week deal at mega-rich Al Hilal in 2023.

Despite the Saudi Pro-League being seen as a semi-retirement option for players hoping for a last pay-day at the end of their career, Mitrovic came in for criticism from fans as he was 28 and at the height of his goalscoring powers when he jumped ship from Craven Cottage in a record £50million deal.

He doubled down on his Middle Eastern adventure this week as he ignored interest from Manchester United, Leeds, West Ham and Birmingham to seal a lucrative move to Qatar-based Al-Rayyan for a salary of around £25m.

Mitrovic, 30, was stung by the flak he came in for when quitting the Premier League and is keen to put the record straight where it matters most – out on the pitch.

Serbia's record goal-scorer – a hat-trick against Andorra on his 100th appearance for his country in June took him to 62 – is desperate to prove a point against England in Tuesday's World Cup showdown in Belgrade.

Mitrovic said: "When you play for a lot of years in the best league in the world, you are just mentally and physically exhausted.

"One year in England is like three years in a different league.

"I played a lot more games (in Saudi) than at Fulham and I scored a lot of goals."

The former Newcastle striker is determined to remind the Premier League of his predatory talents.

This is after he enjoyed an eight-year career in England, where he scored 38 top-flight goals and broke the Championship scoring record with 44 in Fulham's promotion campaign.

Serbia come to Wembley for the return fixture in November, and Mitrovic added: "If you had to choose one of the hardest games to play, then I think it would be England.

"Take into account their talent and their history, you couldn't ask for a tougher challenge."

Dusan Serbs up win

Latvia 0 Serbia 1

SERBIA kept up their unbeaten qualifying record with victory in Latvia.

Dusan Vlahovic (right), who was linked with a move to Newcastle during the summer transfer window, scored the game's only goal in the 12th minute.

The Juventus striker arrowed into the bottom corner from the edge of the box with Serbia yet to concede from their three World Cup qualifying matches.

Serbia boss Dragan Stojkovic said: "The most important thing is victory and three points, that's why we came."

RASH CALL FAILS TO DELIVER FOR TUCH

Marcus miss sums up his loss of confidence

MARCUS Rashford has found to his cost in recent times how friends can be hard to find in football.

He ran out of them at Manchester United – his hometown club.

And even Aston Villa didn't want him, despite Rashford finding a semblance of his best form again on loan there in the second half of last season.

He thought this didn't matter, because it enabled him to secure another loan move, this time to Barcelona. But perhaps he thought wrong.

Because it has taken just over a month for the murmurings to start about all not being well in the relationship between Rashford and the Catalans.

Reports back in Spain have claimed Barca bosses are even weighing up whether to send the forward back to United.

It has been suggested that Rashford is going 'completely unnoticed' in games and has been looking 'shy, imprecise and lost'.

Sound familiar?

The mere prospect of Barca ending the loan agreement at a cost of €5m is enough to send a shiver down the spine of United chiefs, not least manager Ruben Amorim.

But right on cue, from the cloud of negativity surrounding one of England's most high-profile stars, emerged a mate when he needed one. In the shape of Thomas Tuchel.

Not content with picking Rashford in his squad for the latest World Cup qualifiers, he went one better and started him for the visit of Andorra.

Ollie Watkins might have been on the front of the match programme but it was Rashford headlining England's attack alongside captain Harry Kane.

It felt like an absolute gift from Tuchel.

A start on a ground he was familiar with, against a team which had conceded seven goals in their last three games – and have turned losing into an art form.

Tuchel has made no secret of the fact he is invested in Rashford.

He started him in his first game as England manager, against Albania back in March.

And here he was giving Rashford a golden opportunity to boost his chances of being on the plane to the World Cup in North America next summer. Breathing some air into the lungs of a player who has looked winded by life.

ENGLAND.....2
Garcia 25 (OG), Rice 67
ANDORRA.....0

VERDICT

By **Jeremy Cross**

Rashford looked up for taking advantage.

His first touch saw him put Biel Borra on his backside.

His second one nutmegged the same defender, and could have won a penalty.

He picked out Reece James with a long, diagonal pass.

But when a big moment came before half-time, cutting inside and looking to shoot, he chose an ambitious back-heel instead which made him look foolish.

It felt like a microcosm of the frustrated footballer he has become. He then ran into a cul-de-sac, beating two opponents but not a third.

Flickers of potential brilliance attempting to emerge from all the mediocrity, but coming to nothing.

Then came his defining moment of the game.

A sparkling run from Noni Madeuke ended with the ball falling to Rashford.

All he had to do was pick his spot, but he couldn't even hit the target.

Rashford remains one of the most puzzling conundrums in football. Is he great, or hugely over-rated? The statistics show he has had one standout season, when he scored 34 goals for club and country in 2022-23.

It feels like he has flirted with greatness, but found himself being wedded to frustration instead.

He's promised a lot, but delivered far too little.

Rashford will be 28 in October. He should be a footballer approaching his prime.

And if playing for Barcelona ahead of a World Cup year doesn't get his fires burning, nothing will.

If the jury is still out on Tuchel being the right man to win that World Cup, then it's well and truly hung when it comes to deciding if Rashford will ever make the most of the talents he's been given.

ANDERSON SHINES BUT THREE LIONS LACK BITE

By **John Cross**

THOMAS TUCHEL said he was "satisfied" after England limped to a forgettable win over minnows Andorra at Villa Park.

It was far from a rip-roaring display, but there was no repeat of the boos heard following June's reverse fixture in Barcelona. England triumphed 2-0 in Birmingham thanks to Christian Garcia's own goal and a Declan Rice header.

Tuchel has overseen victory in all four qualifiers in charge.

And he now turns his attention to their toughest Group K assignment away to Serbia on Tuesday when the manager expects to face another low block.

Tuchel said of the match against Andorra: "It's stuff that can happen against a narrow team. The second goal should have come earlier because it gave us a lot of freedom. In general with the effort and attitude I am totally satisfied.

"And it was a much better performance than in June. It would have be deserved to win 4-0 or 5-0.

"I think it was a good step, tried to speed up the game constantly.

"We had to give everything to the match, of course, and play against a deep block. But there are no concerns today.

"There are still things to improve, but the direction was the right direction after

GOING FOR GLORY: Rashford takes a shot at Villa Park

SORE POINT: Rashford holds his back after a challenge

CLOSE CONTROL: Rashford takes on Biel Borra of Andorra

the four days of training. It was a good performance, a deserved result.

"We've learned a lot and I'm glad for the players. Now we will prove a point in Belgrade against Serbia."

But Tuchel was full of praise for debutant Elliot Anderson and said he would not hesitate using the Nottingham Forest midfielder in Serbia in their World Cup qualifier on Tuesday night. Tuchel added: "He has the physicality, he's a very mobile six.

"He has the body, he loves to defend, he loves to put his body inside to win duels.

"He loves passing, he loves to break the lines and he's just very mobile in his game. It was a pleasure to see. It was a bit of a nervous start to the week, which is also nice to see – that not everything is normal for the guys, that they're still nervous to come to camp and are not afraid to admit it.

"But very, very quickly he adapted to the quality and then we thought, 'Why not to give him his debut straightaway?'

"I think the team around him made it as easy as possible for him and he had a very strong performance.""

England winger Noni Madueke said: "We won the game, World Cup qualifier, clean sheet and two goals – I am happy.

"They are tough nuts to crack. When you play against 11 players in 30 metres of space it will be hard for every team."

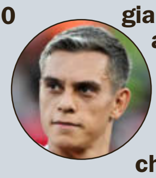
KING AND JAMES: Rice and Reece celebrate

Roma rejected over late Trossard move

By **Ryan Taylor**

ARSENAL turned down a late approach from Roma for Leandro Trossard in the final week of the summer transfer window.

The Belgian, 30 (right), recently penned a new contract with the Gunners, though his deal only included a salary increase and still runs until 2027.



Roma made an enquiry about Trossard's availability and were told a transfer wouldn't be possible. Borussia Dortmund and Turkish giants Fenerbahce also showed an interest in him earlier in the window.

There is every chance Trossard could move on at the end of the season as he will be approaching the final year of his Arsenal contract.

Blues knocked back two bids for Santos

By **Ryan Taylor**

CHELSEA midfielder Andrey Santos was the subject of two mega-money bids this summer.

The Brazil international, 21, has featured in all three of the Blues' Premier League matches so far – but is yet to earn a start.

However, boss Enzo Maresca has personally pushed to keep Santos (above) in west London following an impressive loan spell with sister club Strasbourg last season.

In recent weeks, Saudi Pro League outfit Al-Qadsiah made an approach worth up to £59.5million. West Ham also made a £45m bid in August but were told the former Nottingham Forest loanee was not for sale.

Frank right man for European challenge

By **Richard Edwards**

TOTTENHAM have changed the leader at the top – but Darren Anderton believes the north Londoners finally have the right man in the dugout.

Chairman Daniel Levy left Spurs after almost 25 years on Thursday night, but on boss Thomas Frank (above), club legend Anderton said: "I'm sure he's absolutely buzzing to be involved in the Champions League.

"Tactically I always feel that he can handle whatever is thrown at him.

"His teams have always done well and caused problems against the big teams – you saw that at Brentford.

"That's what the Champions League is all about."

Sangare still up for Middle East mission

By **Clive Hetherington**

NOTTINGHAM FOREST midfielder Ibrahim Sangare is holding out for a move to the Saudi Pro League.

The Saudi transfer window remains open until two weeks on Tuesday, meaning there is plenty of time to strike a deal.

And sources say two clubs are now interested in the Ivorian, 27, after a proposed £30million switch to Al-Qadsiah fell through.

Forest could still recoup the fee they paid PSV Eindhoven for Sangare (left) two years ago.

Before the domestic deadline, he was the subject of talks between Forest and West Ham over a permanent deal or loan with an obligation to buy.

Bellamy looking to get on Canada high

By **Josh Peck**

WALES will be wary not to underestimate Canada on Tuesday as Craig Bellamy's side look to continue their fine form.

Bellamy (right) has lost just one game since taking over last summer and got a vital 1-0 win in Kazakhstan on Thursday to top their World Cup qualification group.

Wales' next test is a friendly in Swansea against a side ranked three spots above them by FIFA. They will turn their attention back to World Cup qualifying when Belgium visit Cardiff on October 13.

Bellamy said: "I am not thinking about Belgium yet, we have Canada to play first.

"The next game is the most important."

Germany provide an acid test for O'Neill

By **Ian Parker**

MICHAEL O'NEILL said he was "excited" to find out how far his young Northern Ireland team has progressed when they face Germany in tonight's World Cup qualifier in Cologne.

In the last two years Northern Ireland have won their Nations League group and recorded notable wins over Denmark, Scotland and Iceland, but a competitive match away to Germany is a different challenge.

On paper this is comfortably the hardest fixture of Northern Ireland's Group A campaign and, asked if his squad was ready for the challenge, O'Neill (above) said: "We'll find out tomorrow night, certainly.

"I think for this game, there's some excitement for me to see where my team's at. That's the way we have to approach it. It's a big step up.

"Most of our players are sprinkled between the Championship and League One but we have resilience in our squad and we have a real desire to do well as a nation.

"We have to punch above our weight and this is an opportunity for us to punch above our weight."

He rejected the idea that a match against a Germany side reeling from a 2-0 defeat to Slovakia is a "free hit".

"That's not a term I would use about any football match," added O'Neill. "But it's an opportunity for us.

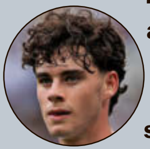
"I think, given where we are as a team, playing one of the superpowers of European football, one of the heavyweights, we have everything to gain from the match."

Archie's new mates earning their Spurs

By **Josh Peck**

ENGLAND'S young guns are focusing on bonding as they kick off their 2027 Euro qualifying campaign.

They defended their U21 Euros crown this summer and have now made the long trip to face Kazakhstan in Aktobe tomorrow.



Spurs youngster Archie Gray (above), who was part of the successful squad in Slovakia, said: "We're just getting to know each other and understanding how each other play.

"It's almost like a pre-season camp with your club. There's not many of the same players as last time, so I definitely feel like an older one even though I'm not.

"It's an exciting group."

Andersen: Danes missed Eriksen's quality

By **Mark Walker**

DENMARK ace Joachim Andersen reckoned they missed the creativity of Christian Eriksen to unlock Scotland in the World Cup opener.

Steve Clarke's side returned from Copenhagen with a hard-earned point after their first game in the group and now face bottom seeds Belarus tomorrow in Hungary.

The Danes were left frustrated at being unable to break down the Scots and Fulham defender Andersen believes Eriksen (left) – still without a club after leaving Manchester United in the summer – could have made all the difference.

He said: "Christian is a big figure on our team and there were perhaps some of his qualities that we missed.

"We could have done with his ability to find the dangerous pass or make some passes that others don't see.

"I think we hit the same type of cross too often and it was a breeze for their defenders and easy for them to defend, so we need to work on that before we face Greece."

DYKES WILL MAKE AMENDS BIG TIME

By **Scott McDermott**

LYNDON DYKES has told the Tartan Army he's still the man to score big goals for Scotland. And the striker has vowed to bury any chance he gets against Belarus tomorrow night.

Dykes squandered a golden opportunity against Denmark in the Scots' goalless World Cup qualifying opener on Friday, though Steve Clarke's side secured a vital point to start their Group C campaign on a positive note.

Dykes was given the nod up front alongside Che Adams but admits he missed a gilt-edged second-half chance.

But the 29-year-old – who hasn't scored for Scotland in 13 games – is adamant he WILL hit the goal trail for his country again.

Dykes said: "As a player, I will put my heart on the line and will work as hard as anyone on the pitch to try and get a win for the team.

"I have scored goals for the country and big ones too, in important games.

"I don't think I have scored in too many friendlies.

"I have scored big goals for Scotland, especially in the last qualifying campaign.

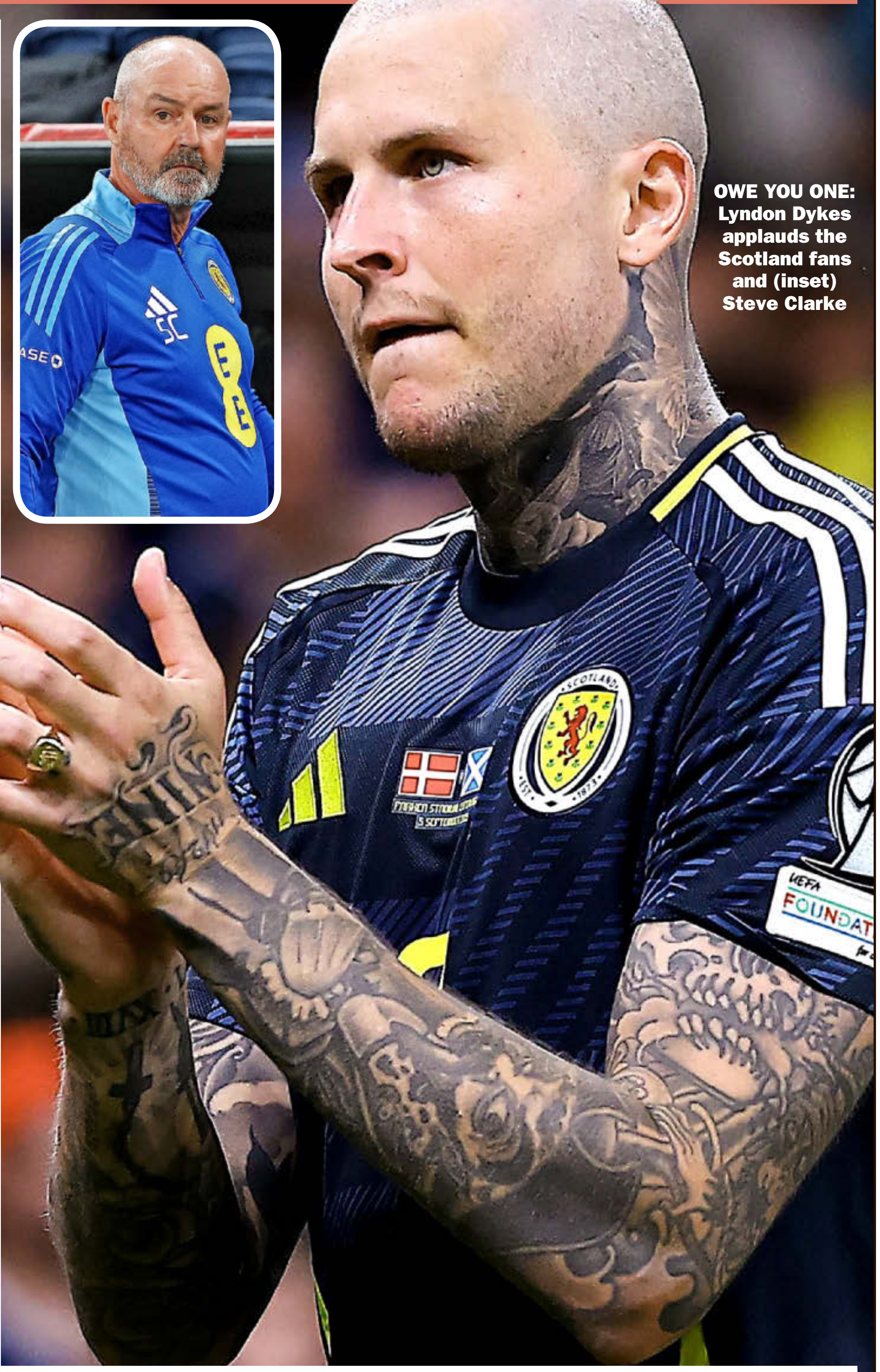
"So yeah, the manager has definitely backed me – but I have also proved that I should be playing for Scotland.

"I have to move on and if I get another chance on Monday, I'll put it in the back of the net."

The draw in Copenhagen could prove to be vital at the end of the World Cup qualifying campaign as Clarke's boys try to get to the finals in the USA, Canada and Mexico next summer.

They now face Belarus – who lost 5-1 to Greece on opening night – at a neutral venue in Hungary behind closed doors.

Birmingham frontman Dykes added: "No disrespect to Belarus but we have to go there full of confidence to get three points."



OWE YOU ONE: Lyndon Dykes applauds the Scotland fans and (inset) Steve Clarke

Isak had it Al here says Solano

By **Lee Ryder**

NOLBERTO SOLANO has told Alexander Isak he has tarnished his Newcastle United legacy – and insists he could have taken Alan Shearer's crown at St James' Park.

Shearer (inset, bottom) remains the club's all-time leading scorer on 206 goals, many of them created by Solano (inset, top), with Isak turning down the option of chasing him down and bowing out on 62 goals.

Like many Newcastle fans, Solano watched on with disappointment as Isak refused to train or play for the Magpies to force his £130million move to Liverpool on deadline day, but feels his old club can still reach for the stars.

Solano said: "Alex could have had it all – even Alan Shearer's crown as the club's record scorer!

"It's not a good look for Alex, this, and when things settle down he will realise why Newcastle's faithful fans feel insulted by his actions, and that's what refusing to play is, insulting to the paying Geordie public.

"He was welcomed with open arms to the city like I was, and many others, so I can see why fans are disappointed.

"At 25 and with three years left on his deal, I think he could have got close to that because Newcastle would have given him a job for life.

"The No.9 shirt was vacant and would have been his to take at Newcastle.

"Alex has looked after himself really, and not the club or the fans.

"He's made his own decision, and he has looked at the financial side of it and his future when he stops playing.

"But he has tarnished his football legacy at Newcastle, make no doubt about that." However, the Peruvian feels that loyalty in football and even long-term contracts that are signed with the best of intentions don't stand for much in the modern game.

Solano said: "In the past 10 to 15 years signing a contract means very little because the moment more money comes into the mix, player power takes over, as we have seen in this window with Isak and many other players that have gone to Saudi Arabia for crazy money.

"I can see why a player would want to go to Liverpool because you have the chance to win the Premier League and trophies, but Newcastle won the Carabao Cup last year and are really starting to build things, and they have the Champions League."

The Swede joined Arne Slot's champions in a British record move but will now have to live up to his £125m fee.

Solano added: "He goes to Liverpool and will be another player but he could have been a god at Newcastle. It depends on his ambitions.

"Alan Shearer was the local lad living his dream and that's why he turned down Man United to play for his boyhood team.

"People loved him for it but Alex obviously didn't want it.

"Once the big money was talked about and his agent got involved, it felt like Alex was 100 per cent ready to go."

SWEDE & SOUR: Alexander Isak left Toon fans fuming

Sky Bet LEAGUE ONE EFL
Sky Bet LEAGUE TWO EFL

IN THE BAG: Joe Taylor nets Huddersfield's third

Donny look Sharp to move joint top

DONCASTER put themselves level on points with Cardiff at the top of Sky Bet League One after a 3-1 win over BRADFORD.

Luke Molyneux's header gave the hosts an early lead but Will Swan soon equalised.

Jordan Gibson put Rovers back in front and Billy Sharp added a third on 44 minutes.

HUDDERSFIELD are up to third after coming from behind to beat bottom club PETERBOROUGH 3-2.

Jimmy-Jay Morgan gave Posh the lead but the Terriers turned things around through Will Alves' close-range effort and a deflected Herbie Kane strike.

Joe Taylor scored Huddersfield's third in stoppage time, with Cian Hayes then pulling a goal back.

BOLTON ended a run of four straight draws with a 3-0 win over WIMBLEDON, who had Marcus Browne and Joe Lewis sent off.

LINCOLN and WIGAN each had a player sent off in the second half of their 2-2 draw. Wigan striker Christian Saydee saw a straight red and Rob Street was dismissed for a second caution.

Charlie Wellens struck in stoppage time to give LEYTON ORIENT a dramatic 3-2 win at PORT VALE.

ROTHERHAM beat EXETER 1-0 while PLYMOUTH saw off STOCKPORT 4-2 and WYCOMBE defeated MANSFIELD 2-0.

In League Two, Aaron Drinan and Paul Glatzel scored in the first half and Princewill Ehibhatiomhan headed a third as SWINDON won 3-1 at BARROW.

WALSALL beat CHESTERFIELD 1-0, despite having midfielder Charlie Lakin sent off, and GRIMSBY won 3-2 at 10-man MK DONS.

Michael Mellon scored a debut goal in the first half to secure OLDHAM a 1-0 win at CAMBRIDGE – to the delight of his father and Latics boss Micky.

ONANA HAS FINAL OK ON TURKEY LOAN DEAL

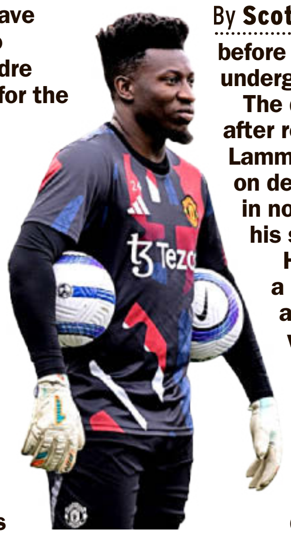
By **Scott Trotter**

MANCHESTER UNITED have reached an agreement to send calamity keeper Andre Onana on loan to Turkey for the season.

United have struck a deal with Trabzonspor to farm out the £47million Cameroon international shot-stopper (right) on a temporary basis – but are waiting for Onana, 29, to say yes to the move.

The transfer window remains open in Turkey until Friday.

Onana, who is under contract until 2028, is in talks over personal terms before potentially flying out to undergo a medical.



The decision, particularly after recruiting £18.2m Senne Lammens from Royal Antwerp on deadline day, leaves Onana in no uncertain terms how far his stock has fallen.

He has not made a Premier League appearance this season, with Altay Bayindir preferred, and had a nightmare at Grimsby in the Carabao Cup.

Lammens, 23, is now increasingly likely to debut in the Manchester derby next Sunday.

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Faultless McIlroy still in contention

GOLF

By **Liam Shaw**

ANGEL HIDALGO provided the fireworks and Rory McIlroy was firmly in contention as Adrien Saddier took a third-round lead at the Amgen Irish Open.

Northern Irish star McIlroy (below), chasing a second victory in his home open at The K Club, shot a bogey-free 68 to leave him tied for fourth place on 11 under par.

Ahead of him are Saddier, who also shot 68 to reach 15 under, Hidalgo and McIlroy's playing partner Alfredo Garcia-Heredia, who outperformed the world No.2 by one stroke with two eagles in a 67 to reach 12 under.

The round of the day, though, belonged to Hidalgo, who carved up the front nine with seven successive birdies and made 12 in all – equalling the European Tour record – in a stunning 63, despite a double bogey at the 16th.

McIlroy's four birdies made for a subdued round by comparison and after ending the day level with second-round leader Joakim Lagergren, he said: "As I was walking off the 18th green, I said to Harry (Diamond, caddie) this is probably the most frustrating four-under-par round I've played in a while.

"I felt like I gave myself a lot of chances, hit some good putts that didn't go in.

"If I can get off to a fast start tomorrow, hopefully I'll be at the back nine in contention."

Saddier, who led after two rounds of last week's European Masters before fading, said: "I'm focused on what I have to do."

Litten warmed up for crunch derby

RUGBY LEAGUE

By **Dave Craven**

JEZ LITTEN revealed Hull KR boss Willie Peters never lets him "chill" – but he's more than happy feeling the heat.

The England hooker, 27, signed a new four-year deal with the Robins this week ahead of their huge derby against Hull FC.

Rampant Rovers hoped to be able to tie up the League Leaders' Shield against their great rivals today.

But Wigan's win in their own derby at St Helens on Friday means they can still mathematically catch Peters' side.

On the back of that, and having also won the Challenge Cup in June, there's little wonder Aussie Peters has attracted interest from his homeland.

He revealed this week to say he'd turned down a chance to interview for the Newcastle Knights vacancy because he wanted to be fully focused on helping the Robins win the treble.

Litten (below) said: "It's great Willie's sticking with the club. He's going to get that type of interest with the success he's had with us."

On how Peters has developed his own game, Litten added: "He's that coach who never really lets you chill. He's always on to you and that has been good for me."

Hull could claim the sixth play-off spot if they sprang a surprise at Craven Park, after Wakefield's loss at Castleford on Friday.

Meanwhile, Umyla Hanley stole the show as Leigh beat Warrington 34-12. He scored one try, made more than 200m and also furnished winger Keanan Brand with a hat-trick.

Max velocity

CHASING: McLaren duo Piastri and Norris

TOP DOG: Pole's perfect for Max Verstappen

By **Dan Moxon**

MAX VERSTAPPEN produced the fastest lap in Formula One history to snatch pole position for the Italian Grand Prix.

It was an unexpected outcome with everyone at Monza anticipating a Ferrari assault on the McLarens.

But none of them could stop the Dutchman, who secured his 45th career pole in a Red Bull that beforehand didn't look quick enough to truly challenge.

And he did so in style, breaking Lewis Hamilton's Monza lap record with a lap at an average speed of 164.484mph.

Lando Norris will join him on the front row today and insisted it was no shock to see the Dutchman at the front of the pack.

He said: "Max has been quick all weekend and it is never a surprise with Max."

Norris endured a messy session but produced his best lap when it mattered to get the better of McLaren team-mate Oscar Piastri.

He added: "It was quite a session for me, just up and down and too many mistakes here and there. But to put it all together on the last lap, I am pretty happy with P2.

"I feel like I did not do the best of jobs, but to end up P2 I am still happy with.

"I want to be ahead of everyone – and that includes my championship contenders and Oscar.

"It is still a good position for tomorrow and I am excited for the race."

Piastri leads the championship by 34 points after Norris's engine failure at Zandvoort last Sunday.

But the Aussie wants to add to his seven wins this season as he bids to pip his more experienced team-mate to the title.

He said: "I feel like I executed a pretty good session, built up to it and found my feet, but I think it's just been incredibly tight this weekend.

"Max and Red Bull look quick this weekend, a lot of teams look quick – it has not been quite so comfortable for us, so the result is not a big surprise.

"When you're on the lap, you're going for it.

"You're going for pole and you don't know what everyone else is going to pull off.

"There's still a long way to go. I'll try to make up some spots, because I'd like a few more wins, if I can."

While the McLaren drivers insisted they were not surprised by Verstappen's achievement, the Dutchman did not expect to beat everyone to pole.

He said: "Around here with the low downforce, it's always very difficult to nail the lap.

"I was happy with the laps. The car has been working a lot better all weekend and to be on pole, I'm very happy with that. For us, it's a great moment.

"Historically this season, the race has been a little more complicated for us but we will definitely give it everything we have."

British driver George Russell starts fifth, benefitting from a grid penalty for Hamilton, with his Mercedes team-mate Kimi Antonelli behind him after an impressive performance from the Italian teenager in his homeland.

ITALIAN GP QUALI

	Driver	Team	Time
1	**M Verstappen** (Ned)	Red Bull	1:18.792
2	L Norris (GB)	McLaren	1:18.869
3	O Piastri (Aus)	McLaren	1:18.982
4	C Leclerc (Mon)	Ferrari	1:19.007
5	L Hamilton (GB)	Ferrari	1:19.124
6	G Russell (GB)	Mercedes GP	1:19.157
7	AK Antonelli (Ita)	Mercedes GP	1:19.200
8	G Bortoleto (Bra)	Kick Sauber	1:19.390
9	F Alonso (Spa)	Aston Martin	1:19.424
10	Y Tsunoda (Jpn)	Red Bull	1:19.519

11 O Bearman (Gbr) Haas F1 1:19.446, 12 N Hulkenberg (Ger) Kick Sauber 1:19.498, 13 C Sainz Jr. (Spa) Williams 1:19.528, 14 A Albon (Tha) Williams 1:19.583, 15 E Ocon (Fra) Haas F1 1:19.707, 16 I Hadjar (Fra) RB 1:19.917, 17 L Stroll (Can) Aston Martin 1:19.948, 18 F Colapinto (Arg) Alpine 1:19.992, 19 P Gasly (Fra) Alpine 1:20.103, 20 L Lawson (Nzl) RB 1:20.279.

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP		
1	O Piastri	309
2	L Norris	278
3	M Verstappen	205
4	G Russell	184
5	C Leclerc	151

CONSTRUCTORS		
1	McLaren	584
2	Ferrari	260
3	Mercedes	248
4	Red Bull	214
5	Williams	80

BID: McColgan

McColgan keen to join the legends and make it

By **Jacob Murtagh**

EILISH McCOLGAN is hoping to follow in the footsteps of her mum and finally clinch victory in today's Great North Run.

The Scottish star has narrowly missed out twice in emulating her mother Liz in winning the event that will feature 60,000 other runners.

McColgan was pipped to top spot in an epic sprint finish in 2021 but is hoping to go one better this time around when she takes on the half marathon route from Newcastle to South Shields.

She said: "It's such an iconic race. I've watched it from a young age, my mum's won there, legends of the sport have all won this race.

"I've been so close on both occasions. Ultimately, I'd love to go there and take the win and it would be amazing. But I am very aware that the field is always really strong."

McColgan, 34, won Commonwealth 10,000m gold earlier in her career but has been hampered by injury problems in recent years.

However, she finally made her marathon debut in London in April, breaking her mum's Scottish record.

McColgan is hoping to make up for lost time and

PERFECT TIME TO THROW IN AHMED

PROSPECT: Rehan Ahmed is clearly part of England's future

By **Neil Squires**

ENGLAND have been urged to give one of the stars of the domestic summer – Rehan Ahmed – a shot against South Africa at Southampton today.

The young all-rounder watched on from the sidelines as England went down to defeat at Headingley and Lord's.

But with the series lost, the dead rubber offers England an opportunity to take a look into their future and Ahmed, 21, is undoubtedly part of that.

He has been in terrific form for Leicestershire and Trent Rockets this season and would help bring some fizz to an England side that has looked flat in comparison to the perky Proteas.

"I would love to see him play on Sunday. He can win you games with the bat or the ball," said Leicestershire's director of cricket Claude Henderson.

"We've always known what a batsman he is and he's taken the opportunity with both hands this season.

"When you do well with the bat, it helps with the bowling and that has gone well too.

"He has a good cricket brain, he has a mature head on his shoulders and he has a feel for the game which is great at his age. He has lots of confidence and hunger, which is very exciting.

"It's up to the England regime, of course, but he can bat in the top six which allows you to pick more bowlers."

England were undone at Lord's on Thursday by having to find 10 overs from part-time spinners Will Jacks and Jacob Bethell, which cost 112 runs.

Ahmed, who became the youngest Test cricketer to take a five-for on debut in 2022 as he helped England to victory over Pakistan in Karachi, is a lot more than a part-time leg-spinner.

He has 23 County Championship wickets at an average of 19 this season, as well as having rattled off five centuries after being promoted to the top of the Leicestershire order this season.

Throw in The Hundred, where he scored 189 runs and took 10 wickets in eight games for the Rockets, and he could not have done much more to press his case.

His leg spin is the facet of his game that England should be particularly interested in.

The first two one-day internationals in the series have once again illustrated how reliant England are upon the skills of Adil Rashid.

The Yorkshire right-arm leg break bowler is England's all-time leading white ball wicket-taking spinner and has been the team's highest wicket-taker in this series with five. At 37, he remains a master of his art but Rashid cannot go on forever.

Whether Ahmed can be his successor, time will tell, but his inclusion in the T20 squad for this week's series against South Africa and the T20 series in Ireland which follows, offers England the best chance to increase his exposure to international cricket.

ADMIRER: Leicestershire chief Claude Henderson

Trescothick's cup concern

ASSISTANT coach Marcus Trescothick accepts England's struggling ODI side cannot afford to take their World Cup spot for granted, stressing the need to "climb those rankings".

Back-to-back defeats against South Africa at Headingley and Lord's have cost England the Metro Bank Series with a game to spare on Sunday and kept them rooted at eighth in the ICC standings.

It now raises concerns over their automatic place at the next global tournament.

Co-hosts South Africa and Zimbabwe are already guaranteed to be there, with the next eight berths determined by the table.

Trescothick said: "We're in a position where we need to climb those rankings.

"No doubt it's been a challenging period but I definitely feel we're improving and moving in the right direction."

PAIR OF ACES: Brits Hunter Bell and Hodgkinson

Georgia targeting golden girl Keely

ATHLETICS

GEORGIA Hunter Bell believes she can take down training partner Keely Hodgkinson and become Britain's new golden girl in a highly-anticipated World Championship showdown.

Hunter Bell, 31, has chosen to solely focus on the 800m in Tokyo this month after an excellent season that has seen her climb to third in the world rankings.

The Londoner won Olympic bronze in the 1500m last summer while world No.1 Hodgkinson became the queen of British athletics with a stunning 800m gold in Paris and later won Sports Personality of the Year.

"Every athlete will stand on the start line in that final believing that they can win," said Hunter Bell.

"We are good friends. We're sharing out here at the prep camp in Miyazaki out of choice.

"I obviously respect her a lot as an athlete. I have raced her twice, both times she's won and she's the best in the world and has been for quite some time in that event."

Hunter Bell has cashed in with two Diamond League wins in Stockholm and London and has chosen to prioritise the shorter event.

Hodgkinson returned from a 376-day lay-off due to win two Diamond League meetings of her own last month and set the ninth-fastest time in history in Lausanne.

The prospect of a British one-two is very real and Hunter Bell – who trains with Hodgkinson in Manchester – insists they will remain friends regardless of the outcome.

She added: "We are just being very supportive and empowered to be in this position."

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Charlie Bennett

third time lucky in iconic race

will use the Great North Run as preparation for her next marathon attempt in New York in November.

She added: "I just needed to get around a marathon and feel like I could do it, because I didn't want it to end up becoming more of a mental thing, that I'm always just never quite going to make it to a start line.

"I've lost two years of the peak part of my career but I'm trying not to think about that. Maybe those are banked extra years, where I can now push on."

Marc Scott leads Britain's charge in the elite men's race, aiming to repeat his 2021 success, but faces competition from defending champion Abel Kipchumba, Alex Mutiso Munyao and Bashir Abdi.

● *Eilish McColgan is a Science in Sport Ambassador. The nutrition experts SiS are also the Official Nutrition Partner of the AJ Bell Great North Run.*

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SPORT IN BRIEF

CRICKET

T20 BLAST - QUARTER FINAL—Lancashire v Kent (Old Trafford): Kent 153 (20 overs). Lancashire 156-7 (18.3 overs; L S Livingstone 85no). *Lancashire beat Kent by 3 wickets.*

CYCLING

VUELTA A ESPANA (Spain) **Stage 14** (Aviles - Alto de La Farrapona. Lagos de Somiedo, 135.9km): 1 M Soler (Spa) UAE Team Emirates-XRG 3hrs 48mins 22secs, 2 J Vingegaard (Den) Team Visma | Lease a Bike +39s, 3 J Almeida (Por) UAE Team Emirates-XRG at same time, 4 J Hindley (Aus) Red Bull-BORA-hansgrohe +43s, 5 F Gall (Aut) Decathlon AG2R La Mondiale Team +48s. **Overall:** 1 J Vingegaard (Den) Team Visma | Lease a Bike 53hrs 19mins 49secs, 2 J Almeida (Por) UAE Team Emirates-XRG +48s, 3 T Pidcock (Gbr) Q36.5 Pro Cycling Team +02:38, 4 J Hindley (Aus) Red Bull-BORA-hansgrohe +03:10, 5 F Gall (Aut) Decathlon AG2R La Mondiale Team +03:30.

GOLF

AMGEN IRISH OPEN (Straffan, Co. Kildare)—**3rd rnd** (GB & Irl unless stated): **201** A Saddier (Fra) 67 66 68, **202** A Hidalgo (Spa) 70 69 63, **204** A Garcia-Heredia (Spa) 72 65 67, **205** J Lagergren (Swe) 70 62 73, R McIlroy 71 66 68, **206** J Skov Olesen (Den) 69 70 67, R Cabrera (Spa) 68 71 67, O Lindell (Fin) 68 70 68, **207** T Olesen (Den) 66 71 70, **208** A Ayora (Spa) 69 71 68, D Brown 67 75 66, D Hillier (Nzl) 71 66 71, S Norris (Rsa) 72 71 65, B Wu (USA) 70 68 70, H Brown (Den) 70 68 70, **209** B Schmidt 69 70 70, T Hatton 70 68 71, J Winther (Den) 72 69 68, C Jarvis (Rsa) 69 72 68, T Pulkkanen (Fin) 69 69 71, **210** N Lemke (Swe) 69 71 70, C Sordet (Fra) 73 70 67, S Lowry 69 71 70, T Clements 70 72 68, R Langasque (Fra) 66 74 70, T Detry (Bel) 73 69 68,.

RUGBY LEAGUE

Betfred Super League

WARRINGTON .... **12** **LEIGH** **34**

Warrington—T: King, J. Thewlis. **G**: Ratchford (2). **Leigh—T**: Brand (3), Davis, Hanley, Hodgson. **G**: O'Brien (5).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hull K R	24	20	0	4	728	240	40
Wigan	25	19	0	6	710	321	38
Leeds	25	18	0	7	596	272	36
Leigh	25	17	1	7	561	426	35
St Helens	25	16	0	9	641	262	32
Wakefield	25	13	0	12	608	430	26
Hull	24	12	1	11	479	415	25
Warrington	25	10	0	15	458	579	20
Catalans D	25	8	0	17	383	622	16
Castleford	25	6	0	19	366	727	12
Huddersfield	25	6	0	19	309	700	12
Salford	25	3	0	22	210	1055	6

RUGBY UNION

The Rugby Ch'ship

AUSTRALIA .... **28** **ARGENTINA** **24**

NEW ZEALAND .... **24** **SOUTH AFRICA** **17**

	P	W	D	L	B	F	A	Pts
N Zealand	3	2	0	1	1	88	70	9
Australia	3	2	0	1	1	88	76	9
Argentina	3	1	0	2	1	77	92	5
S Africa	3	1	0	2	0	69	84	4

Women's World Cup Pool A—England 47 Australia 7, USA 60 Samoa 0.

	P	W	D	L	B	F	A	Pts
England	3	3	0	0	3	208	17	15
Australia	3	1	1	1	2	111	78	8
USA	3	1	1	1	2	98	100	8
Samoa	3	0	0	3	0	3	225	0

Pool B—Canada 40 Scotland 19, Wales 25 Fiji 28.

	P	W	D	L	B	F	A	Pts
Canada	3	3	0	0	3	147	26	15
Scotland	3	2	0	1	2	86	63	10
Fiji	3	1	0	2	1	50	119	5
Wales	3	0	0	3	2	33	108	2

TENNIS

US OPEN (New York)— **Womens Doubles Final:** (3) Gabriela Dabrowski (Can) & Erin Routliffe (Nzl) bt (1) Katerina Siniakova (Cze) & Taylor Townsend (USA) 6-4 6-4.

TODAY'S DIARY

CRICKET

Third One Day International: England v South Africa (The Rose Bowl, 11am). **Third Twenty20 International:** Zimbabwe v Sri Lanka (Harare, 12.30am).

GOLF

DP World Tour Amgen Irish Open (The K Club, Straffan, Co. Kildare, Ireland).

ICE HOCKEY

Elite League Challenge Cup Group B: Fife Flyers v Dundee Stars.

MOTOR RACING

FIA Formula 1 Italian Grand Prix (Monza, Italy).

RUGBY LEAGUE

Betfred Super League (3.05): Hull KR v Hull.

Betfred Championship (3pm): Doncaster v York, Featherstone v Oldham, Halifax v Widnes, Hunslet v Sheffield.

Betfred League 1 (3pm): Midlands Hurricanes v Newcastle (2pm), Rochdale v Dewsbury.

Betfred Women's Super League (2pm): Barrow Raiders Women v York Valkyrie, Huddersfield Giants Women v Leeds Rhinos Women, Warrington Wolves Women v Leigh Leopards Women (12pm).

RUGBY UNION

Women's Rugby Union World Cup Pool C (2.45): Japan v Spain (12pm), New Zealand v Ireland.

Pool D (2pm): France v South Africa (4.45), Italy v Brazil.

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10 RUGBY UNION

Kabeya's forward thinking puts gloss on tough battle

FIRST BLOOD: Jess Breach scores England's first try against Australia

England 47 Australia 7

By **James Toney**

STAND-IN skipper Alex Matthews admitted there is room for improvement as England's Rugby World Cup campaign survived a slight scare at the seaside.

The 40-point winning margin over Australia looks a solid return from this day trip to Brighton, but you don't need to dig too deep into the stats to realise it was far from flawless.

The win sets up a quarter-final with Scotland in Bristol next week and means John Mitchell's side will avoid either defending champions New Zealand or world No.2 Canada until the Twickenham final.

But perhaps this was the feisty arm-wrestle required after blowout wins over the USA and Samoa.

"We didn't have the momentum but we stuck to our game plan and we deserved to come out on top," said player of the match Matthews.

"That match was the challenge that everyone wanted us to have and we showed we can do it, perhaps we needed that.

"Things were not functioning how they normally do but that was a real squad effort to get it done."

All the wisdom says this is a tournament at the Red Roses' mercy and, while they stretched their unbeaten streak to a record-equalling 30, this show might just slow the hype train.

Mitchell talks about a relentless focus on themselves so a game punctuated with errors will give him cause for concern.

Line-outs were lost, passes were fumbled and a lack of discipline proved costly as, for the first time in 536 minutes, England went behind in a match.

Adiana Talakai crashed over as Australia laid down a marker with a converted try, only for England flier Jess Breach to chalk off some of that lead in her 50th match.

But expectations this could be one-way traffic soon evaporated as England repeatedly chased down cul-de-sacs. It was left to the forwards to get the job done.

Abbie Ward and Sadia Kabeya gave them a 12-point half-time lead.

Kabeya added another after the restart as England started to click and Australia tired.

Kelsey Clifford dived over twice in quick succession after Australia were reduced to 14.

Sarah Bern's close-range try, before she also saw yellow, completed the second-half scoring while Zoe Harrison added 12 points with the boot.

TRY TIME: Kabeya scores

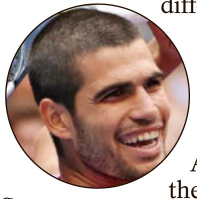
TENNIS

NO ESCAPE FROM ALCARAZ FINALS

By **Yasmin Syed**

FOR the third time this year, Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz will face off in a Grand Slam final – a new first for the Open era when the same two opponents have met in at least three Major finals in the same season.

Ahead of their US Open showdown with the No.1 ranking up for grabs, defending champion Sinner said: "We have faced each other quite a lot lately. When we step on court, we try to prepare the match tactically and in different ways."



Alcaraz (left) is through to his eighth straight final while Sinner, 24, has reached five successive Major finals.

Spanish world No.2 Alcaraz, 22, could become the first man to claim the title in Flushing Meadows without dropping a set. Alcaraz, who won the trophy here as a teenager in 2022, reflected on Sinner's improvement. He said: "He spoke about the physical conditions that he has to improve. The last two years, he has improved a lot."

Brits Joe Salisbury and Neal Skupski suffered heartbreak as they blew three championship points in the men's doubles final, losing to Marcel Granollers and Horacio Zeballos.

CLASH : Sinner will defend his US Open crown against Alcaraz

A happy hour for Haggas

By **David Yates**

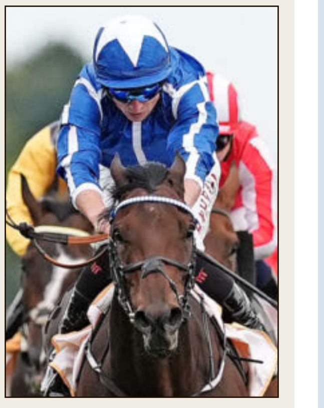
The Reverend defied trainer William Haggas' pre-race worries with a narrow victory over stablemate Dramatic Star in the Betfair Exchange Old Borough Cup at Haydock.

With stable jockey Tom Marquand on board, The Reverend was the 7-2 favourite for the prestigious handicap, despite the fact Haggas had voiced his concerns about the drying Merseyside turf.

Dramatic Star was the first of the Haggas pair to hit the front but Marquand's mount was doing his best work at the finish and scored by a neck.

Haggas said: "I thought he wanted softer ground, so what do I know? But he was in really good form today, he went to post beautifully – really full of zest."

The Reverend's (right) win completed a quick four-timer for Haggas inside 90 minutes – 4-1 shot Valiancy also won at Haydock, while Abloom (2-1 fav) and Tenability (85-40) did the business at Ascot.



APPLEBY'S BIG MOMENT

By **David Yates**

MICK APPLEBY savoured the first domestic Group One triumph of his career as Big Mojo captured Haydock Park's Sprint Cup at 16-1.

Appleby, known earlier in his career for winning humble races on the all-weather, showcased his skills at a higher level when Big Evs landed the Grade One Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf Sprint at Santa Anita in November 2023.

And the 55-year-old reached a new milestone as Big Mojo, (above) carrying the same red-and-blue colours of owners Paul and Rachael Teasdale, and William Buick powered down the stands' rail to beat Kind Of Blue by a length and a half, with French-trained even-money favourite Lazzat only fifth.

Appleby said: "He's been in great form, sowe were coming here quite optimistic and everything went to plan."

Big Mojo had come within a neck of a Group One success in the July Cup at Newmarket but was a beaten favourite on rain-softened ground at Goodwood next time.

"We were unhappy at Goodwood but we put it down to the ground," added Appleby. "Luckily, the ground had dried out."

YORK PREMIER MEETING (ITV4/RTV)

THE SCOUT: 2.30 **DELINQUENT** (nb), 3.00 Vintage Clarets, 3.30 Artisan Dancer, 4.00 Danger Bay, 4.30 Elmonjed, 5.00 **REVELANCE** (nap), 5.30 Billyb.

2.30 'CONFINED' EBF MAIDEN STAKES 2YO £12,885 (Class 2) 7f (9 declared) ITV4

1	(6)		**A BOY NAMED MARY** N Tinkler 9-7	**F McManoman**	–
2	(3)	2	**CROWN OFFICE (30) (F)** W Haggas 9-7	**C Fallon**	83
3	(8)	2	**DELINQUENT (21) (F)** K R Burke 9-7	**S James**	★86
4	(7)		**FOZZIE** K Ryan 9-7	**T Eaves**	–
5	(1)	5	**INFINITE DREAM (30) (T)** A Balding 9-7	**P J McDonald**	79
6	(9)		**OCEAN OF STORMS** S & E Crisford 9-7	**H Davies**	–
7	(2)	2	**PROUD NATION (47)** R Fahey 9-7	**Oisin Orr**	77
8	(5)		**VALENDAY** K Ryan 9-7	**K Stott**	–
9	(4)	2	**SECRET HISTORY (33) (F) (T)** E Walker 9-2	**K Shoemark**	84

Forecast: 5-2 Crown Office, 3 Delinquent, 7-2 Secret History, 7 Proud Nation, 10 Infinite Dream, 14 Valenday, Ocean Of Storms, 20 Fozzie, 33 A Boy Named Mary.

2024: No corresponding race.

3.00 SKY BET SUPER SUB SPRINT HANDICAP £23,193 (2) 5f 89yds (15) ITV4

1	(7)	111804	**ALZAHIR (22) (D)** J Candlish 5 9-12	**G Wood**	103
2	(8)	652717	**VINTAGE CLARETS (18) (C&DO,F)** R Fahey 6 9-10	**Ethan Tindall(7)**	103
3	(9)	521430	**BERGERAC (18) (C&D)** K Ryan 7 9-5	**T Eaves**	105
4	(12)	032140	**SQUEALER (18) (C&D)** N Tinkler 5 9-4	**R Scott**	106
5	(13)	8-12110	**DYONISOS (38) (D)** I Williams 3 9-4	**B Loughnane**	81
6	(11)	152182	**DAN TUCKER (21) (D)** J O'Keeffe 3 9-0	**W Fentiman(5)**	103
7	(4)	820-913	**AIR FORCE ONE (18) (C&D)** G Oldroyd 4 9-0	**P J McDonald**	102
8	(5)	504200	**VANTHEMAN (18) (D)** K Ryan 4 8-13	**K Stott**	107
9	(1)	002780	**SILKY WILKIE (127) (D)** K R Burke 6 8-13	**C Lee**	★108
10	(3)	375L-34	**KING OF STARS (22) (D)** M Appleby 8 8-12	**A Rawlinson**	101
11	(2)	591110	**SPRING IS SPRUNG (18) (D)** P Midgley 6 8-12	**J Hart**	103
12	(6)	249310	**CURIOUS ROVER (18) (D)** K Scott 4 8-11	**Shay Farmer(7)**	104
13	(15)	144400	**ROUSING ENCORE (9) (C,D)** R Carr 5 8-11	**JP Sullivan**	106
14	(14)	LL7616	**MANILA SCOUSE (57) (D)** T Easterby 6 8-9	**D Allan**	105
15	(10)	21134L	**BLINKY (79) (D)** A Brittain 3 8-8	**C Hardie**	102

VISOR: No. 7 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 1, 14 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 3, 8, 10, 13, 15.

Forecast: 7-2 Air Force One, 7 Dan Tucker, 8 Vantheman, 10 Vintage Clarets, Squealer, King Of Stars, Rousing Encore, Spring Is Sprung, Alzahir, 12 Others.

2024: No corresponding race.

3.30 HANDICAP £15,462 (3) 2m 56yds (10) ITV4

1	(4)	66-0L60	**ENEMY (15)** I Williams 8 10-2	**B Loughnane**	95
2	(6)	722319	**FIREBLADE (18) (D)** D Cunha 4 9-11	**David Egan**	92
3	(9)	54-534L	**SCOTTISH ANTHEM (24)** Michael Keady 6 9-6	**D Keenan**	94
4	(7)	307322	**ARTISAN DANCER (10) (D)** C Johnston 5 9-4	**J Hart**	94
5	(8)	L5-5327	**RIBBLE VIBE (17)** D O'Meara 4 9-3	**M Winn**	93
6	(1)	281307	**GIBSIDE (57) (C&D)** T Easterby 6 9-2	**D Fentiman**	★97
7	(2)	1-39524	**UMBRIA (22) (T)** E Walker 4 9-1	**K Shoemark**	94
8	(10)	351318	**ROCK N ROLL PINKIE (17) (C&D)** I Furtado 5 9-1	**H Crouch**	96
9	(5)	17L843	**DIAMOND BAY (15) (C,D) (T)** T Ward 7 9-1	**J Crowley**	94
10	(3)	049-510	**TERRORISE (18) (C&D)** B Ellison 4 8-13	**B Robinson**	93

VISOR: No. 9 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 1, 3 CHEEK PIECES: No. 10.

Forecast: 3 Artisan Dancer, 11-2 Umbria, Terrorise, 6 Fireblade, 7 Diamond Bay, 8 Gibside, 10 Ribble Vibe, Rock N Roll Pinkie, 16 Others.

2024: No corresponding race.

4.00 MIDDLE DISTANCE HANDICAP £15,462 (3) 1m 2f 56yds (12) ITV4

1	(11)	514405	**MAGNUM OPUS (31)** S & E Crisford 4 10-2	**H Burns(3)**	95
2	(7)	1100L-	**THEORY OF TIDES (360) (D)** J & T Gosden 4 9-12	**R Havlin**	83
3	(1)	211354/	**CONTACT (916) (D)** D & N Barron 7 9-12	**W Pyle(3)**	–
4	(6)	3-138	**TYCOON (78) (D)** K P De Foy 3 9-11	**David Egan**	89
5	(4)	1-5611P	**DANTE'S LAD (38) (C&D)** G Boughey 3 9-9	**B Loughnane**	91
6	(12)	2-311	**DANGER BAY (26) (F)** E Bethell 3 9-9	**C Rodriguez**	93
7	(8)	870786	**DARK MOON RISING (15) (C)** K Ryan 6 9-5	**Jack Callan(5)**	94
8	(5)	523632	**PER CONTRA (15)** T Easterby 4 9-5	**D Allan**	★99
9	(2)	1-2310	**GUNSHIP (80) (D)** J Ferguson 3 9-4	**D Muscutt**	91
10	(10)	474426	**HORNSEA BAY (31)** D O'Meara 3 9-3	**K Stott**	97
11	(9)	4-32215	**NOBLE HORIZON (26) (D)** W Haggas 3 9-2	**C Fallon**	89
12	(3)	1-954L5	**ZAIN BLUE (15) (C)** J Butler 4 9-2	**Warren Fentiman(5)**	98

VISOR: No. 1 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 5, 9 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 12.

Forecast: 11-4 Danger Bay, 13-2 Gunship, 7 Per Contra, 8 Noble Horizon, Magnum Opus, Tycoon, Hornsea Bay, 12 Zain Blue, 14 Others.

2024: No corresponding race.

4.30 STARMAN GARROWBY STAKES (LISTED) £39,697 (1) 6f (11) ITV4

1	(8)	1-35241	**LETHAL LEVI (16) (D)** K R Burke 6 9-7	**C Lee**	116
2	(2)	442102	**ELMONJED (16) (C&D)** W Haggas 4 9-4	**C Fallon**	112
3	(7)	40-2707	**GRAND GREY (57)** K Ryan 4 9-4	**K Stott**	117
4	(10)	650L18	**ROYAL ZABEEL (15) (D)** M Appleby 4 9-4	**D Muscutt**	114
5	(6)	21-21	**ALMERAQ (48) (D)** W Haggas 3 9-2	**J Crowley**	★118
6	(3)	32-1518	**CRESTOFDISTINCTION (59) (D)** J Channon 3 9-2	**C Rodriguez**	111
7	(9)	194785	**PELLITORY (16)** James Owen 3 9-2	**P Cosgrave**	109
8	(1)	121211	**PRINCE OF INDIA (29) (D,F)** M Botti 3 9-2	**David Egan**	115
9	(4)	236-198	**TIGER BAY (58) (D)** H Candy 5 9-2	**T Whelan**	115
10	(11)	210-15	**KASSAYA (35) (T)** A Balding 3 8-11	**P J McDonald**	110
11	(5)	610915	**STORMY IMPACT (21) (D)** R Fahey 3 8-11	**S Gray**	111

BLINKERS: No. 1 VISOR: No. 7 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 2, 3, 8 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 2, 6.

Forecast: 15-8 Almeraq, 7-2 Prince Of India, 6 Lethal Levi, 8 Elmonjed, Kassaya, 16 Grand Grey, Tiger Bay, 20 Others.

2024: Quinault 4-9-7, Marco Ghiani 6-4 Fav (S C Williams), drawn (2), 8 ran.

5.00 FILLIES' HANDICAP £15,462 (3) 1m 177yds (11) ITV4

1	(1)	314201	**ZAPPHIRE (24)** J Camacho 5 10-0	**Tom Kiely-Marshall(5)**	88
2	(5)	6122-0L	**LAURA BAY (48) (T)** D Menuisier 4 9-11	**K Shoemark**	★89
3	(6)	21-315	**ORANGE SKY (57)** G Boughey 3 9-10	**B Loughnane**	85
4	(7)	57-8534	**ROYALTY BAY (29) (C)** S Spencer 3 9-10	**D Swift**	87
5	(3)	1-6L85	**RHAPSODY (18)** W Haggas 3 9-6	**J Hart**	86
6	(9)	3411	**SEREN STAR (16) (D,F)** W Haggas 3 9-6	**C Fallon**	85
7	(4)	72-11	**REVELANCE (38) (D) (T)** R Beckett 3 9-6	**H Crouch**	86
8	(8)	325425	**EPIDAVROS (5) (D)** K Scott 4 9-3	**Shay Farmer(7)**	87
9	(11)	36L131	**FOLKENE (15)** Roger Fell 3 9-2	**Joanna Mason**	86
10	(10)	13048	**STATEIRA (56) (T)** A Balding 3 9-1	**Doubtful**	
11	(2)	68611	**WONDERBOLT (22)** K R Burke 3 9-0	**S James**	85

CHEEK PIECES: No. 1.

Forecast: 5-2 Revelance, 7-2 Seren Star, 6 Wonderbolt, 8 Zapphire, Folkene, 10 Rhapsody, 12 Orange Sky, 14 Epidavros, 20 Others.

2024: No corresponding race.

5.30 MILE APPRENTICE HANDICAP £12,885 (4) 7f 192yds (17) ITV4

1	(9)	040100	**OBELIX (22) (C,D)** J Camacho 5 10-3	**Tom Kiely-Marshall**	85
2	(1)	9-149L4	**ZRYAN (29) (D)** D O'Meara 4 10-2	**C J Whiteley(7)**	83
3	(4)	8-05313	**BILLYB (29) (C&D)** Craig Lidster 6 10-2	**Ashley Lewis(3)**	84
4	(5)	22L522	**BARLEY (13) (D)** T Easterby 6 10-0	**J Dickson(7)**	86
5	(8)	4/6L69-4	**RAJAPOUR (111) (D)** D O'Meara 5 9-13	**C Horgan**	82
6	(3)	718830	**FEEL THE NEED (31) (C,D)** M Herrington 5 9-9	**A Pinna(5)**	85
7	(12)	465321	**EARTHWATCH (39) (D,F)** W Haggas 3 9-7	**Warren Fentiman**	83
8	(6)	101321	**DOUBLE PARKED (15) (D)** T Easterby 3 9-7	**Archie Young**	84
9	(7)	35-2195	**BOWEN ISLAND (82)** K Ryan 3 9-7	**Jack Callan(3)**	84
10	(16)	224102	**COMMANDER OF LIFE (22)** Jessica Macey 4 9-6	**Mr Mason Paetel(3)**	85
11	(2)	141257	**CANVAS (29) (D)** S Dixon 3 9-6	**S Feilden(3)**	86
12	(11)	98205L	**TROPEZ POWER (65) (D)** M Walford 6 9-5	**Olivia Tubb(3)**	★90
13	(15)	097554	**THEME PARK (15) (C&D)** N Tinkler 5 9-5	**Ethan Tindall(5)**	84
14	(14)	500220	**LIR SPECIALE (17)** B Ellison 6 9-4	**Shay Farmer(3)**	88
15	(17)	257523	**HALE END (15) (D)** M Dods 5 9-3	**Rhys Elliott**	87
16	(10)	029822	**HARSWELL RUBY (15) (D)** Roger Fell 3 8-11	**J Nicholls(3)**	84
17	(13)	8-26348	**ONEMORENOMORE (14)** P McBride 5 8-11	**Morgan Cole**	85

CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 3, 4, 15.

Forecast: 7-2 Earthwatch, 7 Barley, 8 Double Parked, Commander Of Life, Billyb, 14 Theme Park, Feel The Need, Hale End, 16 Others.

2024: No corresponding race.

FONTWELL (SKY)

THE SCOUT: 2.12 Inspector Lynley, 2.42 **DE TEMPS EN TEMPS** (trb), 3.12 Blackacre, 3.42 Pahlavi, 4.12 Big Jimbo, 4.42 Mirror Of Illusion.

2.12 CONDITIONAL JOCKEYS' HANDICAP HURDLE £3,248 (Class 5) 2m 5f 164yds (9 declared)

1	5P3-757	**BARROW RANGER (30)** J J Hanlon (IRE) 4 12-0	**Paddy Hanlon(3)**	92
2	32-4L55	**JACK THE SAVAGE (45)** L Horsfall 8 11-9	**L Saunders(3)**	★104
3	16/PP42	**LOCKED DOWN LAD (18)** J Tickle 5 11-1	**C Pritchard**	97
4	864L-5P	**SHANTOU LUCKY (66)** James Owen 8 10-10	**Nathan Howie**	98
5	31P36-4	**INSPECTOR LYNLEY (123) (D)** N Mulholland 8 10-9	**Harriet Tucker(3)**	99
6	40L6-7	**GHOST PEPPER (87)** D J Jeffreys 5 10-7	**J Brace**	71
7	3L34-L3	**BEBSIDE BANTER (18)** M Comley 8 10-6	**F Mitchell**	94
8	321/65P-	**HE IS A CRACKER (373) (C)** F Brennan 9 10-6	**Isabelle Ryder(5)**	–
9	7/P8P-LP	**OF CORSE I CAN (7)** N Mulholland 8 10-2	**B Harris**	91

VISOR: No. 4 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 2, 4, 8 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9.

Forecast: 2 Locked Down Lad, 7-2 Barrow Ranger, 4 Bebside Banter, 10 Shantou Lucky, Inspector Lynley, 12 Jack The Savage, Of Corse I Can, 14 Others.

2024: No corresponding race.

2.42 V2 RADIO MAIDEN HURDLE £4,193 (4) 2m 3f 29yds (11)

1	643/67-	**CHEDINGTON'S GUEST (251)** Kieran Burke 6 11-4	**J A Anderson(3)**	95
2		**CINNODIN (F77) (F)** J Snowden 5 11-4	**G Sheehan**	–
3	2214-34	**DE TEMPS EN TEMPS (64)** M Keighley 6 11-4	**S Bowen**	★121
4	46	**FINAL STRAW (44)** N Henderson 5 11-4	**Mr D Wiliams(7)**	105
5		**FULLFORWARD (F90)** M Madgwick 5 11-4	**M Goldstein**	–
6	677-	**HARKSMAN (135)** M Keighley 5 11-4	**J Best**	70
7	45-6	**STRAIGHTNUPSOLDIER (18)** David Dennis 5 11-4	**C J Todd**	72
8	4227-33	**TAMARIND BAY (2) (T)** M Bowen 5 11-4	**Doubtful**	
9	F4-4	**TURNDLIGHTSDOWNLOW (106)** M Keighley 5 11-4	**A Wedge**	93
10		**KING'S REIGN (F37)** G & J Moore 4 11-1	**C Quinn**	–
11	7L	**DYADORAS DESTINY (65)** M Young 4 10-8	**D Noonan**	–

TONGUE STRAP: No. 1.

Forecast: Evens De Temps En Temps, 11-2 Cinnodin, King's Reign, 7 Final Straw, 10 Chedington's Guest, 12 Turndlightsdownlow, 20 Fullforward, 33 Others.

2024: Prince Imperial 7-11-4, Sean Bowen 2-1 Fav (O Murphy), 9 ran.

3.12 SOUTHERN CONTRACT LIFTING HANDICAP CHASE £3,248 (5) 3m 1f 210yds (6)

1	70L57-2	**LOUGH OWEL (92)** D Summersby 7 12-0	**B Carver**	89
2	P/54P-25	**UNBLINKING (44) (T)** R Bevis 12 11-9	**G Sheehan**	93
3	4PL3-L6	**BALLYNAHEER (18)** David Dennis 6 11-9	**J J Burke**	94
4	523-611	**BLACKACRE (8) (D)** E Williams 6 11-5	**A Wedge**	★95
5	111P/PL	**MOZZARO (44) (D)** M Keighley 10 11-4	**J Best**	39
6	LL-76LL	**MAWLOOD (9) (C)** Georgie Howell 9 10-2	**Doubtful**	

BLINKERS: No. 6 VISOR: No. 4 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 1, 2, 3, 6 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 3, 5.

Forecast: 8-13 Blackacre, 4 Lough Owel, 6 Unblinking, 8 Ballynaheer, 25 Mozzaro.

2024: Instant Gambler 8-10-3, Adam Wedge 25-1 (Alexandra Dunn), 10 ran.

3.42 BET CLEVER BETGOODWIN HANDICAP HURDLE £4,066 (4) 2m 3f 29yds (5)

1	31/LL-P0	**GOODWIN (50) (C)** C Gordon 7 12-2	**F Gordon(3)**	107
2	873051	**PAHLAVI (13)** J J Hanlon (IRE) 8 12-0	**Paddy Hanlon(5)**	105
3	1P/PL27-	**SUN JOY (212)** B Pauling 6 11-6	**B R Jones**	68
4	3121L5-	**BRAVE JEN (181)** Cynthia Woods 7 11-5	**J Andrews(3)**	106
5	9-21L17	**STINGINHISSTEP (17) (D)** Mrs S Gardner 6 11-0	**Sean Houlihan**	★108

TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 2, 3, 4 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 1, 4.

Forecast: 10-11 Pahlavi, 4 Stinginhisstep, 9-2 Sun Joy, 11-2 Goodwin, 20 Brave Jen.

2024: No corresponding race.

4.12 RJS WASTE MANAGEMENT UK HANDICAP CHASE £4,700 (4) 2m 3f 104yds (5)

1	L-52177	**MIDNIGHT JEWEL (7) (C&D)** C Longsdon 9 12-0	**Lilly Pinchin**	113
2	P-22221	**LERMOOS LEGEND (50) (D) (T)** M Bowen 10 11-11	**S Bowen**	114
3	PL-24UL	**TRAPISTA (17) (D)** J & A O'Neill 8 11-4	**R McLernon**	★115
4	324PP-7	**ATREIDES (18)** N Mulholland 7 10-11	**C O'Farrell**	100
5	32P5P/1	**BIG JIMBO (9) (C)** G & J Moore 8 10-5	**F Mitchell(5)**	113

TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 2, 4 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5.

Forecast: 11-10 Lermoos Legend, 7-4 Big Jimbo, 8 Atreides, 10 Midnight Jewel, 12 Trapista.

2024: Midnight Jewel 8-11-11, Lilly Pinchin 4-1 (C Longsdon), 5 ran.

4.42 BETGOODWIN MARES' OPEN NH FLAT RACE £2,451 (5) 2m 1f 162yds (8)

1	L	**JAX BELLE (44)** L Wadham 5 11-2	**T Cannon**	–
2	84	**OPENING DANCE (67)** E Lavelle 5 11-2	**B R Jones**	94
3	3P3-4	**TEDDINGTON LOCK (127)** S Bradstock 5 11-2	**Miss L Bradstock(7)**	–
4	5	**BAILEYS BIG IMAGE (125)** M Young 4 11-0	**C Hammond**	–
5	0	**ELIOT GIRL (44)** J Tickle 4 11-0	**Taylor Fisher**	39
6		**KELLEBELLE** D J Jeffreys 4 11-0	**Mr J King(3)**	–
7	23	**LADY KARA (11)** Dr R Newland & J Insole 4 11-0	**L Scott(5)**	★105
8		**MIRROR OF ILLUSION (F)** J Snowden 4 11-0	**G Sheehan**	–

TONGUE STRAP: No. 2 CHEEK PIECES: No. 1.

Forecast: 6-4 Lady Kara, 9-4 Opening Dance, 7-2 Mirror Of Illusion, 14 Kellebelle, 16 Teddington Lock, Jax Belle, 33 Baileys Big Image, 50 Eliot Girl.

2024: Miss Ireland 5-11-2, Marc Goldstein 12-1 (Mrs L Richards), 6 ran.

+++ YESTERDAY'S RESULTS +++ YESTERDAY'S RESULTS +++ YESTERDAY'S RESULTS +++

ASCOT: Round: soft-good to soft in places; straight: good to soft-soft in places

1.40—RIVER CARD (J Leavy, 4-1) 1; Maltese Cross (11-2) 2; Lost Boys (13-8 fav) 3. 5 ran. (B Meehan).

2.10—CROWN OF OAKS (C Fallon, 8-11 fav) 1; Stem (14-1) 2; Wave Rider (2-1 2nd fav) 3. 6 ran. (W Haggas).

2.40—NATIVE WARRIOR (J P Spencer, 10-3 fav) 1; Great Acclaim (11-1) 2; Mirabeau (20-1) 3; Thunder Roar (33-1) 4. 20 ran. (K R Burke).

3.15—TENABILITY (C Fallon, 85-40 2nd fav) 1; Push The Limit (11-8 fav) 2; Too Soon (25-1) 3. 7 ran. (W Haggas).

3.50—ABLOOM (M Ghiani, 2-1 fav) 1; Bright Times Ahead (10-1) 2; Noche Clasica (5-2 2nd fav) 3. 8 ran. (W Haggas). Non-runner: Protest.

4.25—BROSAY (H Davies, 9-1) 1; Jubilee Walk (12-1) 2; Binhareer (3-1 fav) 3; Candy (28-1) 4. 19 ran. (P Attwater).

4.55—WOOLHAMPTON (H Crouch, 7-2 fav) 1; All Ways Glamorous (12-1) 2; Jakajaro (8-1) 3; Northern Spirit (13-2) 4. 16 ran. (B Millman).

Placepot: £28.80

(Race 1) 4, 3; (2) 6, 5; (3) 9, 6, 16, 10; (4) 6, 2; (5) 8, 9, 7; (6) 13, 5, 16, 11.

Quadpot: £7.70

HAYDOCK: Good

1.15—ZEUS OLYMPIOS (W Buick, 11-4 fav) 1; Excellent Believe (12-1) 2; Checkandchallenge (40-1) 3. 9 ran. (K R Burke). Non-runner: Balmacara.

1.50—BOW ECHO (B Loughnane, 5-6 fav) 1; Publish (11-4 2nd fav) 2; Shayem (10-1) 3. 7 ran. (G Boughey). Non-runner: He's Waliim.

2.25—VALIANCY (S Osborne, 4-1 2nd fav) 1; Ride The Thunder (15-2) 2; Fantasy World (12-1) 3. 10 ran. (W Haggas; 11-4 fav Pole Star). Non-runner: Tiernan.

3.00—THE REVEREND (T Marquand, 7-2 fav) 1; Dramatic Star (7-1) 2; Stressfree (11-1) 3. 15 ran. (W Haggas). Non-runners: Tashkhan, Torcello.

3.35—BIG MOJO (W Buick, 16-1) 1; Kind Of Blue (12-1) 2; Flora Of Bermuda (22-1) 3; Rage Of Bamby (80-1) 4. 17 ran. (M Appleby; evens fav Lazzat).

4.07—DEMOCRACY DILEMMA (T Eaves, 12-1) 1; Luna A Inbhir Nis (2-1 fav) 2; Jer Batt (5-2 2nd fav) 3. 9 ran. (R Cowell). Non-runner: Atomic Force.Atomic Force| Rule 4 applies to All Bets, deduct 15p in the pound

4.40—SPECIAL GHAIYYATH (C Lee, 10-1) 1; Mezcala (9-4 fav) 2; Tilted Kilt (8-1) 2; 8 ran. , (J Tate). Non-runners: A War Eagle, Surrey Shadow, We Dare To Dream.A War Eagle| Rule 4 applies to All Bets, deduct 20p in the pound

5.15—DUKE'S COMMAND (K Stott, 5-1 jt 2nd fav) 1; Tele Red (6-1) 2; Two B Tanned (12-1) 3. 10 ran. (D O'Meara; 10-3 fav Magellan Cloud).

Jackpot: £10,000.00, with £4,920.39 carried over

Placepot: £103.20

(Race 1) 9, 6, 2; (2) 2, 5; (3) 9, 8, 7; (4) 6, 13, 2; (5) 11, 6, 12; (6) 2, 7, 5.

Quadpot: £26.20

KEMPTON: Standard to slow

1.35—GIAVELLOTTO (O Murphy, 9-4 2nd fav) 1; Kalpana (1-2 fav) 2; Meydaan (16-1) 3. 6 ran. (M Botti).

2.05—SKY SAFARI (O Murphy, 5-2 fav) 1; Local Hero (6-1 2nd fav) 2; Dragon Icon (9-1) 3. 14 ran. (J Fanshawe).

2.35—JUST CALL ME ANGEL (R Havlin, 10-3) 1; Calling A Star (15-2) 2; Mayaada (7-5 fav) 3. 4 ran. (E Dunlop). Non-runner: Magic Box.

3.10—FIVE WAYS (Jason Watson, 4-1) 1; Rogue Supremacy (40-1) 2; Sirius A (40-1) 3. 10 ran. (A Balding; 9-4 jtfav Egoli, 9-4 jtfav Beckford's Folly).

3.45—DRAMA (O Murphy, 3-1 2nd fav) 1; Leadenhall Street (4-1) 2; Aramram (15-8 fav) 3. 12 ran. (J Ferguson).

4.20—CAPRELO (O Murphy, 2-1 fav) 1; Cock And Bull (22-1) 2; Dino Bellagio (4-1) 3. 9 ran. (H Morrison). Non-runner: Capone.

4.50—SIEMPRE ARTURO (C T Keane, 3-1 fav) 1; Great Bedwyn (9-1) 2; Mrs Twig (12-1) 3. 11 ran. (D & C Kubler). Non-runner: Wisper.

Placepot: £122.80

(Race 1) 2, 4; (2) 7, 8, 12; (3) 1; (4) 4, 6, 7; (5) 2, 8, 1; (6) 4, 1, 8.

Quadpot: £53.40

STRATFORD: Good-good to firm in places

4.12—CHILLHI (Nathan Howie, 13-8 2nd fav) 1; Gavin (6-5 fav) 2; Jo's Rainbow (12-1) 3. 5 ran. (James Owen).

4.45—HAMLET'S NIGHT (S Bowen, 13-8 2nd fav) 1; Test The Market (16-1) 2; Tilehurst (5-4 fav) 3. 12 ran. (James Owen). Non-runners: Animato, Three Pikes.

5.22—IN THE AIR (Ciaran Gethings, 7-2) 1; Finest View (11-4 2nd fav) 2; Lakefield Flyer (9-1) 3. 6 ran. (A Ralph; 5-2 fav Black Hawk Eagle).

5.55—RADHARC NA SLAINE (S Bowen, 9-2) 1; Gone In Sixty (7-2 2nd fav) 2; McGregors Charge (3-1 fav) 3. 9 ran. (D Rees). Non-runner: Limerick Leader.

6.25—BELLES BENEFIT (H Bannister, 2-1 2nd fav) 1; Mother Ship (11-2) 2; Barely Famous (3-1) 3. 4 ran. (B Case; 13-8 fav All Under Control). Non-runners: Dontworrywegotthis, Hurst Hill, Midnight Gold, Needtoknow, Raincloud, Somebodycomegether, Wrappedinrubies.

6.55—HILL STATION (L Scott, 8-1) 1; Basilette (13-2 jt 2nd fav) 2; Lady Caro (25-1) 3. 11 ran. (Dr R Newland & J Insole; 4-5 fav Jet Patrol).

Placepot: £51.90

(Race 1) 3, 4; (2) 6, 8, 10; (3) 5, 1; (4) 9, 6, 5; (5) 4; (6) 9, 6, 4.

Quadpot: £27.40

THIRSK: Good-good to soft in places

2.20—DUNKELD DREAMER (S Gray, 9-1) 1; Mr Moonshine (9-1) 2; Real Man (5-6 fav) 3. 5 ran. (K R Burke).

2.50—DAZZLING HAZE (Jack Callan, 9-2 2nd fav) 1; U Turn (12-1) 2; Dandy Style (11-4 fav) 3. 11 ran. (S & E Crisford).

3.25—SIMPLIFY (H Doyle, 9-4 2nd fav) 1; Zoiros (11-2) 2; River Spey (11-10 fav) 3; Here Forever (40-1) 4. 16 ran. (A Balding). Non-runner: Straight Ahead.

4.00—DASH OF AZURE (E Greatrex, 15-8 fav) 1; Bellarchi (10-1) 2; Beaujolais Nouveau (50-1) 3. 11 ran. (R Beckett).

4.35—ETERNAL SUNSHINE (Lauren Young, 7-2 2nd fav) 1; Diligently (11-1) 2; Winged Messenger (16-1) 3; Mister Sox (28-1) 4. 16 ran. (J Goldie; 11-4 fav Musical Touch).

5.05—BOSPHORUS ROSE (D E Hogan, 11-10 fav) 1; Tafsir (11-1) 2; Free Speech (14-1) 3. 7 ran. (Sir M Prescott). Non-runners: Primo Lara, Shahbaz.

5.35—MASTER RICHARD (David Egan, 7-1) 1; Highfield Viking (11-1) 2; Pressure's On (9-2 fav) 3. 15 ran. (Mrs A Duffield). Non-runner: Altmore.

Placepot: £207.40

(Race 1) 5, 4; (2) 2, 10, 5; (3) 16, 8, 6; (4) 4, 3, 6; (5) 11, 5, 10, 12; (6) 2, 4.

Quadpot: £9.70

WOLVERHAMPTON: Standard

5.10—MOONLIGHT MIRAGE (L Edmunds, 5-2 fav) 1; Westend Music (10-3 2nd fav) 2; Yellow Diamonds (4-1) 3. 8 ran. (G Scott). Non-runners: Diamond Alexander, Legendofmilo.

5.40—GUERNSEY ANGEL (P Cosgrave, 11-8 fav) 1; Mwaki (10-1) 2; Pull The Rug (3-1 2nd fav) 3. 9 ran. (P Evans).

6.12—CENSUS (P Cosgrave, evens fav) 1; Sky Advocate (4-1) 2; Dancingintherain (15-8 2nd fav) 3. 4 ran. (S & E Crisford).

6.42—NIGHT ON EARTH (A Breslin, 11-8 fav) 1; Phoenix Beach (4-1) 2; Level Up (10-1) 3. 8 ran. (I Williams).

7.12—DUFFUS CASTLE (Ashley Lewis, 13-2) 1; Spinning Dancer (50-1) 2; Pretty Spirited (2-1 fav) 3. 11 ran. (P McBride).

7.42—GOLDEN GARDEN (L Edmunds, 6-4 fav) 1; Rogue Justice (9-1) 2; Daaris (15-8 2nd fav) 3. 6 ran. (J Osborne).

8.12—KARAKULA (L Edmunds, 11-2) 1; Magic Runner (10-1) 2; Le Pelerin (15-2) 3. 10 ran. (J Ferguson; Evens fav Zouligan).

Placepot: £13.20

(Race 1) 7, 9, 10; (2) 2, 8, 3; (3) 1; (4) 1, 2, 6; (5) 8, 11, 2; (6) 3, 4.

Quadpot: £7.40

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WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

GROUP K

ENGLAND 2 ANDORRA 0

Garcia 25 (og)
Rice 67
HT: 1-0

LATVIA 0 SERBIA 1

Vlahovic 12
HT: 0-1

GROUP F

ARMENIA	0	PORTUGAL	5
REP OF IRELAND	L	HUNGARY	L

GROUP H

AUSTRIA	L	CYPRUS	L
SAN MARINO	L	BOSNIA-HERZ	L

GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
N Ireland	1	1	0	0	3	1	2	3
Slovakia	1	1	0	0	2	0	2	3
Luxembourg	1	0	0	1	1	3	-2	0
Germany	1	0	0	1	0	2	-2	0

GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Switzerland	1	1	0	0	4	0	4	3
Slovenia	1	0	1	0	2	2	0	1
Sweden	1	0	1	0	2	2	0	1
Kosovo	1	0	0	1	0	4	-4	0

GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Greece	1	1	0	0	5	1	4	3
Denmark	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Scotland	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Belarus	1	0	0	1	1	5	-4	0

GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Iceland	1	1	0	0	5	0	5	3
France	1	1	0	0	2	0	2	3
Ukraine	1	0	0	1	0	2	-2	0
Azerbaijan	1	0	0	1	0	5	-5	0

GROUP E	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Spain	1	1	0	0	3	0	3	3
Turkey	1	1	0	0	3	2	1	3
Georgia	1	0	0	1	2	3	-1	0
Bulgaria	1	0	0	1	0	3	-3	0

GROUP F	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Portugal	1	1	0	0	5	0	5	3
Hungary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rep of Ireland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Armenia	1	0	0	1	0	5	-5	0

GROUP G	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Finland	4	2	1	1	5	5	0	7
Netherlands	2	2	0	0	10	0	10	6
Poland	3	2	0	1	4	2	2	6
Lithuania	3	0	2	1	2	3	-1	2
Malta	4	0	1	3	0	11	-11	1

GROUP H	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Bosnia-Herz	3	3	0	0	4	1	3	9
Austria	2	2	0	0	6	1	5	6
Romania	4	2	0	2	8	4	4	6
Cyprus	3	1	0	2	3	4	-1	3
San Marino	4	0	0	4	1	12	-11	0

GROUP I	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Norway	4	4	0	0	13	2	11	12
Israel	4	3	0	1	11	6	5	9
Italy	3	2	0	1	7	3	4	6
Estonia	5	1	0	4	5	13	-8	3
Moldova	4	0	0	4	2	14	-12	0

GROUP J	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Nth Macedonia	4	2	2	0	6	2	4	8
Wales	4	2	1	1	10	6	4	7
Belgium	2	1	1	0	5	4	1	4
Kazakhstan	3	1	0	2	3	4	-1	3
Liechtenstein	3	0	0	3	0	8	-8	0

GROUP K	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
England	4	4	0	0	8	0	8	12
Serbia	3	2	1	0	4	0	4	7
Albania	4	1	2	1	4	3	1	5
Latvia	4	1	1	2	2	5	-3	4
Andorra	5	0	0	5	0	10	-10	0

GROUP L	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Czech Rep	5	4	0	1	11	6	5	12
Croatia	3	3	0	0	13	1	12	9
Montenegro	4	2	0	2	4	5	-1	6
Faroe Islands	4	1	0	3	3	5	-2	3
Gibraltar	4	0	0	4	2	16	-14	0

TODAY'S GAMES (7.45pm unless stated)

GROUP A: Germany v Northern Ireland, Luxembourg v Slovakia. **GROUP E:** Georgia v Bulgaria (2pm), Turkey v Spain. **GROUP G:** Lithuania v Holland (5pm), Poland v Finland. **GROUP J:** North Macdeonia v L'tenstein (5pm), Belgium v Kazakhstan.

1-2-X CHECK

POOLS NUMBER	FULL TIME
1	1A
2	1A
3	3
4	1A
5	1
6	3
7	1A
8	1A
9	1A
10	1
11	1
12	1
13	2
14	2
15	1A
16	2
17	1A
18	3
19	1
20	1A
21	1
22	1
23	1
24	2
25	1
26	1
27	1
28	1A
29	3
30	1A
31	1
32	2
33	1
34	1A
35	L
36	SUN
37	1
38	SUN
39	SUN
40	1A
41	SUN
42	SUN
43	SUN
44	SUN
45	L
46	L
47	SUN
48	SUN
49	1

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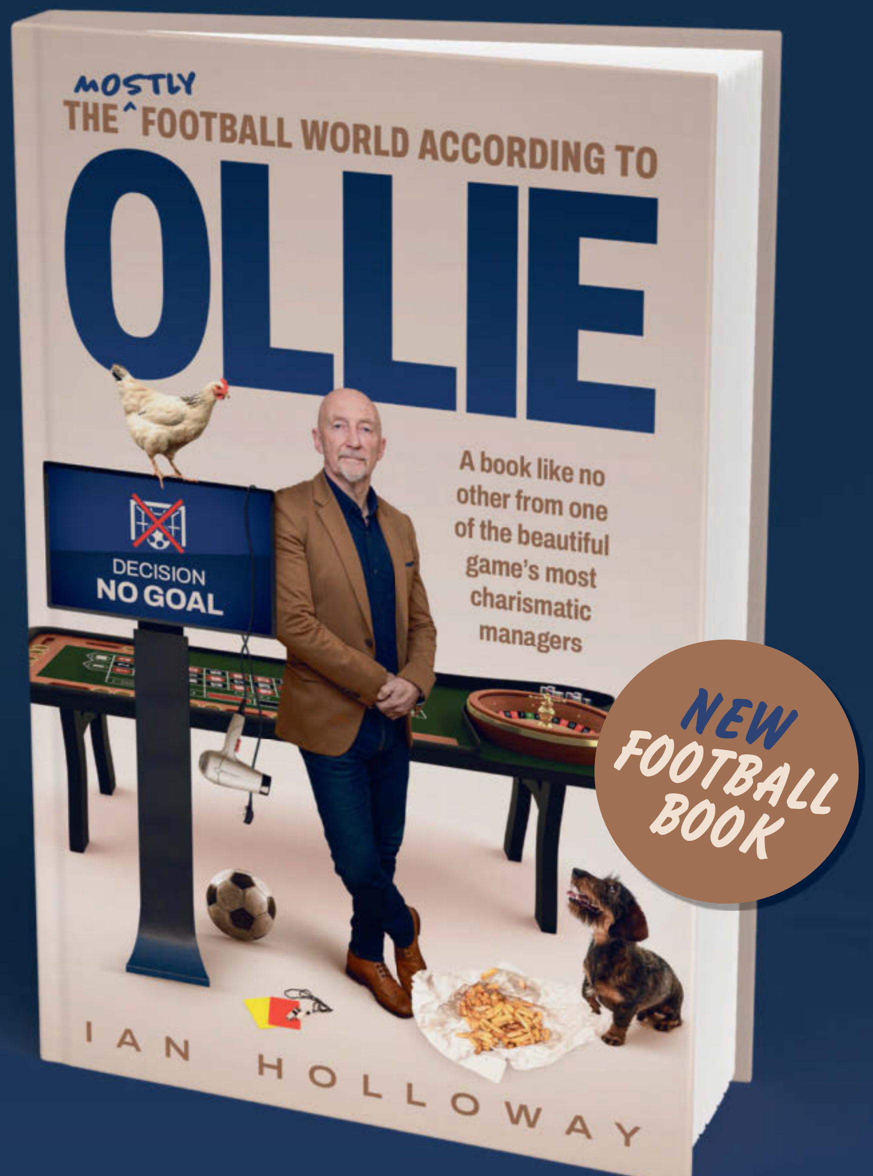
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SKY BET LEAGUE ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Cardiff	6	5	1	0	11	1	10	16
Doncaster	7	5	1	1	9	5	4	16
Huddersfield	7	5	0	2	14	8	6	15
Stevenage	6	5	0	1	9	4	5	15
Bradford	7	4	2	1	11	9	2	14
Barnsley	6	4	1	1	11	7	4	13
Luton	6	4	0	2	8	3	5	12
Lincoln City	7	3	3	1	10	8	2	12
Stockport	7	3	2	2	12	11	1	11
Bolton	7	2	4	1	9	6	3	10
Mansfield	7	3	1	3	11	9	2	10
L Orient	7	3	1	3	9	12	-3	10
Exeter	7	3	0	4	9	7	2	9
Wigan	7	2	3	2	10	9	1	9
AFC W'don	7	3	0	4	8	9	-1	9
Northamptn	6	2	1	3	4	6	-2	7
Rotherham	6	2	1	3	5	8	-3	7
Plymouth	7	2	0	5	8	15	-7	6
Wycombe	7	1	2	4	7	9	-2	5
Reading	6	1	2	3	5	9	-4	5
Burton A	5	1	1	3	5	9	-4	4
Blackpool	6	1	1	4	7	13	-6	4

BOLTON 3 AFC W'DON 0

Burstow 29
Cozier-Duberry 53
Randall 62
HT: 1-0 Att: 20,157

DONCASTER 3 BRADFORD 1

Molyneux 6 — Swan 12
Gibson 22, Sharp 44
HT: 3-1 Att: 11,191

HUDDERSFID 3 PETERBORO 2

Alves 60 — Morgan 47
Kane 67 — Hayes 90
Taylor 90
HT: 0-0 Att: 16,383

LINCOLN CITY 2 WIGAN 2

Collins 31 (pen), 34 — Mullin 10
Wright 50
HT: 2-1 Att: 8,208

PLYMOUTH 4 STOCKPORT 2

Wootton 24 (og) — Norwood 45 (pen)
Watts 39 — Wootton 90
Ibrahim 48, Tolaj 75
HT: 2-1 Att: 1,579

PORT VALE 2 L ORIENT 3

Croasdale 7 — Connolly 13
Cole 52 — Ballard 44, Wellens 90
HT: 1-2 Att: 7,721

ROTHERHAM 1 EXETER 0

Hall 39
HT: 1-0 Att: 7,699

WYCOMBE 2 MANSFIELD 0

Bell 14
Woodrow 52 (pen)
HT: 1-0 Att: 5,080

SKY BET LEAGUE TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Gillingham	7	4	3	0	11	5	6	15
Swindon	7	5	0	2	14	9	5	15
Walsall	7	5	0	2	7	4	3	15
Grimsby	7	4	2	1	13	8	5	14
Bromley	7	3	4	0	12	7	5	13
Crewe	7	4	1	2	11	7	4	13
Chesterfield	7	4	1	2	11	9	2	13
Salford City	7	4	1	2	10	8	2	13
MK Dons	7	3	2	2	12	6	6	11
Notts Cnty	7	3	2	2	12	9	3	11
Fleetwood	7	3	2	2	9	9	0	11
Cambridge U	7	3	1	3	8	7	1	10
Bristol Rvrs	7	3	1	3	7	8	-1	10
Tranmere	6	2	2	2	10	7	3	8
Harrogate T	7	2	2	3	7	9	-2	8
Colchester	7	1	4	2	7	8	-1	7
Oldham	7	1	4	2	4	5	-1	7
Barnet	7	2	1	4	6	10	-4	7
Barrow	7	2	0	5	5	9	-4	6
Crawley Tn	7	1	2	4	5	11	-6	5
Shrewsbury	7	1	2	4	5	13	-8	5
Newport	7	1	1	5	7	12	-5	4
Cheltenham	7	1	1	5	3	12	-9	4
Accrington	6	0	3	3	3	7	-4	3

BARNET 1 SHREWSBURY 3

Shelton 14 — Collinge 15 (og)
Ihionvien 25, Clucas 42
HT: 1-3 Att: 3,009

BARROW 1 SWINDON 3

Shipley 80 — Drinan 2, Glatzel 36
Ehibhatiomhan 77
HT: 0-2 Att: 3,077

BROMLEY 2 GILLINGHAM 2

Kabamba 7 — Andrews 56
Cheek 12 — Clark 90 (pen)
HT: 2-0 Att: 3,005

CAMBRIDGE 0 OLDHAM 1

Mellon 21
HT: 0-1 Att: 6,570

CHELTENHAM 1 ACCRINGTON 0

Hutchinson 2
HT: 1-0 Att: 3,284

COLCHESTER 1 CREWE 1

Lisbie 66 — March 39
HT: 0-1 Att: 4,572

HARROGATE 0 CRAWLEY TN 1

Brown 42
HT: 0-1 Att: 2,757

MK DONS 2 GRIMSBY 3

McEachran 47 (og) — Green 9
Lemonheigh-Evans 90 — Kabia 23, Vernam 29
HT: 0-3 Att: 7,758

NEWPORT CO 2 BRISTOL R 3

Whitmore 78 — Thomas 52, 59, Harrison 72
Opoku 89 — HT: 0-0 Att: 5,305

NOTTS CNTY 1 FLEETWOOD 0

Dennis 46
HT: 0-0 Att: 9,068

SALFORD C 3 TRANMERE 1

Garbutt 56 (pen) — Patrick 64
Stockton 81, Ashley 86 — HT: 0-0 Att: 3,628

WALSALL 1 CHESTERFID 0

Kanu 43
HT: 1-0 Att: 6,695

OTHER RESULTS

Enterprise National League: Aldershot 2, Brackley 2; Altrincham 2, Sutton Utd 1; Boreham W 3, Morecambe 0; Boston Utd 1, Solihull M 2; Carlisle 3, Truro City 0; Forest Gn 1, Hartlepool 0; Rochdale 2, Braintree Tn 0; Scunthorpe A, Wealdstone A; Southend 3, FC Halifax 0; Tamworth 1, Eastleigh 0; Woking 5, Gateshead 0; Yeovil 1, York 3.

Enterprise National League North: Alfreton Tn 1, King's Lynn Town 1; Bedford Town 2, Curzon Ashton 2; Buxton 2, Oxford City 1; Chester FC 1, Scarborough Athletic 1; Chorley 3, AFC Telford 1; Darlington 1, Hereford FC 1; K'minster 1, Macclesfield FC 1; Merthyr Town 2, Worksop Town 0; Peterborough Sports 0, AFC Fylde 5; Radcliffe 4, Marine 1; Southport 0, South Shields 0; Spennymoor Town 2, Leamington 0.

Enterprise National League South: Chesham Utd 0, Bath City 0; Chippenham 1, Hampton & Richmond 1; Dag & Red 2, Worthing 5; Dorking Wanderers 2, AFC Totton 1; Eastbourne Borough 0, Hemel Hempstead 0; Ebbsfleet 1, Hornchurch 1; Enfield Town 0, Weston-S-Mare 1; Farnborough 1, Dover 2; Maidenhead Utd 2, Chelmsford 1; Maidstone Utd 0, Horsham 3; Salisbury FC 1, Tonbridge Angels 3; Torquay 4, Slough 2.

The Isthmian Premier Division: Aveley 1, St Albans 1; Billericay 2, Ramsgate 2; Brentwood Town 3, Carshalton Ath 2; Cheshunt 1, Burgess Hill Town 1; Chichester City 1, Potters Bar Town 3; Cray Valley (PM) 1, Hashtag United 2; Dartford 2, Canvey Island 2; Dulwich 3, Welling 1; Folkestone Invicta 4, Whitehawk 1; Lewes 2, Cray Wanderers 2; Wingate & Finchley 0, Chatham Town 3.

The Northern Premier Division: Bamber Bridge 1, Workington 2; FC United of Manchester 2, Cleethorpes Town 0; Gainsborough Trinity 2, Warrington Town 0; Hebburn Town 3, Hyde Utd 3; Ilkeston Town 0, Whitby Town 1; Leek Town 4, Guiseley 0; Prescot Cables 2, Morpeth Town 1; Rushall Olympic 2, Lancaster City 3; Stockton Town 3, Stocksbridge P S 2; Warrington Rylands 2, Hednesford Town 2.

The Southern Premier Central: AFC Sudbury 2, Banbury Utd 1; Barwell 1, Needham Market 1; Bishop's Stortford 0, Stourbridge 1; Bromsgrove Sporting 0, St Ives Town 4; Harborough Town 1, Halesowen Town 1; Leiston 2, Quorn 3; Real Bedford 0, Redditch Utd 2; Royston Town 0, Alvechurch 3; Stamford 0, Bury Town 2; Stratford Town 2, Spalding Utd 2; Worcester City 1, Kettering 1.

The Southern Premier South: Basingstoke Town 1, Hungerford Town 2; Berkhamsted 0, Wimborne Town 3; Farnham Town 2, Sholing 2; Gloucester 2, Dorchester Town 0; Havant and W 1, Plymouth Parkway 0; Poole Town 1, Chertsey Town 0; Tiverton Town 2, Bracknell Town 0; Uxbridge 2, Taunton Town 2; Walton & Hersham 2, Evesham Utd 1; Weymouth 0, Hanwell Town 0; Yate Town 1, Gosport Borough 1.

THIS WEEK'S FIXTURES

TODAY 3PM UNLESS STATED

WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE

Brighton v Aston Villa (Noon); Liverpool v Everton (Noon); Man Utd v Leicester (Noon); Tottenham v West Ham (Noon).

TOMORROW 7.45PM UNLESS STATED

FIFA WORLD CUP - EUROPEAN QUALIFYING GROUP B

Kosovo v Sweden; Switzerland v Slovenia.

GROUP C

Belarus v Scotland; Greece v Denmark.

GROUP I

Israel v Italy.

GROUP L

Croatia v Montenegro; Gibraltar v Faroe Islands.

QUALIFYING GROUP FOUR

Kazakhstan U21 v England U21 (4pm).

GROUP NINE

Belarus U21 v Austria U21 (5pm); Wales U21 v Denmark U21 (7.30pm).

TUESDAY 7.45PM UNLESS STATED

FIFA WORLD CUP - EUROPEAN QUALIFYING GROUP D

Azerbaijan v Ukraine (5pm); France v Iceland.

GROUP F

Armenia v Rep of Ireland (5pm); Hungary v Portugal.

GROUP H

Bosnia-Herz v Austria; Cyprus v Romania.

GROUP I

Norway v Moldova.

GROUP K

Albania v Latvia; Serbia v England.

INTERNATIONAL MATCH

Wales v Canada.

EUROPEAN UNDER-21 CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFYING GROUP TWO

Azerbaijan v Bulgaria (3pm); Gibraltar v Czech R (Noon); Scotland v Portugal (7pm).

VERTU TROPHY NORTHERN GROUP B

Tranmere v Nottm Forest U21 (7pm).

NORTHERN GROUP F

Mansfield v Harrogate Town.

THURSDAY 7.45PM UNLESS STATED

UEFA WOMEN'S CHAMPIONS LEAGUE - THIRD QUALIFYING ROUND FIRST LEG

Brann v Man Utd (5pm)

FRIDAY 7.45PM UNLESS STATED

SKY BET CHAMPIONSHIP

Ipswich v Sheff Utd (8pm).

WILLIAM HILL SCOTTISH CHAMPIONSHIP

Partick v Airdrieonians.

WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE

Man City v Brighton (7.30pm); West Ham v Arsenal (7.30pm).

SCOTTISH LEAGUE TROPHY LEAGUE STAGE

ALLOA	5	CELTIC U21	4
ANNAN ATHLETIC	2	ST MIRREN U21	2
CLYDE	4	MOTHERWELL U21	0
EAST FIFE	1	DUMBARTON	1
EAST KILBRIDE	2	HAMILTON	4
EDINBURGH CITY	4	HEARTS U21	2
ELGIN	1	COVE RANGERS	0
FORFAR	4	DUNDEE U21	1
KELTY HEARTS	3	STRANRAER	0
MONTROSE	3	ABERDEEN U21	1
PETERHEAD	3	DUNDEE UTD U21	0
QUEEN OF SOUTH	2	RANGERS U21	1
SPARTANS	5	HIBERNIAN U21	1
STENHOUSEMUIR	4	KILMARNOCK U21	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inverness	3	3	0	0	10	3	9
Stenhousemr	3	3	0	0	9	2	9
Montrose	3	3	0	0	9	3	9
Edinburgh City	3	3	0	0	8	4	9
Peterhead	3	2	1	0	8	3	7
East Fife	3	2	1	0	8	4	7
Dumbarton	3	2	1	0	6	3	7
Forfar	3	2	0	1	5	2	6
Kelty Hearts	3	2	0	1	4	1	6
Celtic U21	3	2	0	1	8	6	6
East Kilbride	3	2	0	1	8	6	6
Queen of Sth	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
Stranraer	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
Elgin	3	2	0	1	5	5	6
Spartans	3	1	2	0	7	3	5
Hamilton	3	1	1	1	6	5	4
Cove Rangers	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
St Mirren U21	3	1	1	1	7	8	4
Clyde	3	1	0	2	6	6	3
Alloa	3	1	0	2	8	9	3
Dundee Utd U21	3	1	0	2	4	6	3
Stirling	3	1	0	2	4	6	3
Annan Ath	3	0	1	2	3	6	1
Motherwell U21	3	0	1	2	1	7	1
Rangers U21	3	0	0	3	3	8	0
Hearts U21	3	0	0	3	3	9	0
Kilmarnock U21	3	0	0	3	2	8	0
Aberdeen U21	3	0	0	3	4	11	0
Dundee U21	3	0	0	3	3	10	0
Hibernian U21	3	0	0	3	2	9	0

VANARAMA NATIONAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Forest Green	8	6	2	0	15	4	20
Rochdale	7	6	0	1	15	4	18
Carlisle	8	5	2	1	17	6	17
Southend	8	5	2	1	14	5	17
Boreham W	7	4	2	1	14	10	14
Hartlepool	8	3	4	1	9	3	13
Altrincham	8	4	0	4	12	11	12
Wealdstone	7	4	0	3	11	10	12
Scunthorpe	5	3	2	0	10	6	11
Tamworth	7	3	1	3	8	8	10
Gateshead	8	3	1	4	11	21	10
Aldershot	8	2	3	3	22	17	9
York	5	2	3	0	8	4	9
Brackley	7	2	3	2	8	8	9
Eastleigh	7	3	0	4	7	8	9
Woking	8	2	2	4	11	12	8
FC Halifax	8	2	2	4	8	14	8
Yeovil	8	2	1	5	9	14	7
Boston Utd	7	2	1	4	7	12	7
Braintree Tn	8	2	1	5	6	13	7
Solihull M	8	1	3	4	7	14	6
Sutton Utd	8	1	2	5	10	17	5
Truro City	8	1	1	6	6	14	4
Morecambe	5	1	0	4	3	13	3

SCOTTISH CHAMPIONSHIP

MORTON	0	RAITH	1
ROSS COUNTY	1	ARBROATH	2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
St Johnstone	4	3	1	0	10	2	10
Raith	5	3	1	1	7	4	10
Arbroath	5	3	1	1	7	6	10
Partick	4	2	1	1	8	9	7
Dunfermline	4	1	2	1	4	4	5
Morton	5	0	4	1	4	5	4
Ayr	4	0	3	1	4	5	3
Queen's Park	4	0	3	1	4	6	3
Airdrieonians	4	0	2	2	3	6	2
Ross County	5	0	2	3	6	10	2

WELSH PREMIER

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Caernarfon Tn	5	3	2	0	16	6	11
TNS	6	3	2	1	11	4	11
Bala Town	6	3	2	1	6	4	11
Penybont	6	3	1	2	6	5	10
Briton Ferry	5	2	2	1	10	6	8
Flint Town Utd	5	2	1	2	14	11	7
Colwyn Bay	6	1	4	1	9	7	7
Connah's QN	5	2	1	2	6	9	7
Barry Town Utd	5	1	3	1	6	5	6
H'fordwest C	5	1	2	2	4	9	5
Cardiff Met Uni	6	0	4	2	9	14	4
Llanelli Town	6	0	0	6	3	20	0

ISTHMIAN PREMIER

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brentwood Tn	6	5	1	0	18	10	16
Dulwich	6	5	0	1	12	2	15
Folkestone I	6	4	2	0	12	5	14
Cheshunt	6	4	1	1	14	7	13
Chatham Tn	6	4	1	1	11	4	13
Lewes	6	4	1	1	10	6	13
Cray	6	3	2	1	10	10	11
Whitehawk	6	3	1	2	8	9	10
Aveley	6	2	3	1	8	8	9
Chichester C	6	2	2	2	8	7	8
Billericay	6	2	2	2	8	8	8
Burgess Hill Tn	6	2	2	2	8	10	8
Hashtag Utd	6	2	1	3	8	9	7
Cray Valley	6	2	0	4	11	10	6
Dartford	6	1	3	2	11	14	6
Carshalton A	6	2	0	4	7	12	6
Potters Bar Tn	6	1	2	3	10	11	5
St Albans	6	1	2	3	7	8	5
Ramsgate	6	1	2	3	12	18	5
Welling	6	1	0	5	5	13	3
Wingate & F	6	0	1	5	6	13	1
Canvey Isl	6	0	1	5	4	14	1